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Sophene, Gordyene, and Adiabene

*Three Regna Minora of Northern Mesopotamia
Between East and West*

By

Michał Marciak



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To My Wife, Weronika



.... He researches into the wisdom of all the Ancients,
he occupies his time with the prophecies ...
... he travels in foreign countries,
he has experienced human good and human evil ...

SIR. 39:1.4 (NJB)

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Needless to say, the manuscript as it now stands is my sole responsibility, and its potential deficiencies are not the fault of anyone else.

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Michał Marciak

Kraków, Poland

December 25, 2016

Abbreviations and Preliminary Remarks

As a rule, the abbreviations follow *L'Année Philologique*. As far as abbreviations common in Biblical studies, the *SBL Handbook of Style for Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Early Christian Studies* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1999), edited by P.H. Alexander et al., is used.

Concerning toponyms and anthroponyms of Syriac background, the transliteration follows, for the most part, the publications of Chabot 1902 and Fiey 1965–68. However, some ancient proper names (which have common Anglicized forms) have not been (fully) transliterated.

Several abbreviations employed in this book (including those not present in AP or the SBL Handbook) are reproduced below for ease of reference.

AE	<i>L'Année Epigraphique</i> , Paris 1988–
AMS	<i>Acta Martyrum et Sanctorum</i>
ANRW	H. Temporini, W. Haase (eds.), <i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt</i> , Reihe II: <i>Principat</i> , Berlin 1970–
Ant.	Josephus, <i>Antiquitates Judaicae</i>
BCE	Before the Common Era
Bell.	Josephus, <i>De Bello Judaico</i>
BHO	P. Peeters, <i>Bibliotheca Hagiographica Orientalis</i> , Brussels, 1910
BP	<i>The Epic Histories Attributed to P'awstos Buzand</i> , "Buzandaran Patmut'iwnk", trans. and comm. by N.G. Garsoïan, Cambridge, MA, 1989
BT	<i>Babylonian Talmud</i>
CE	Common Era
CIIP	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Iudaeae/Palestinae: A Multi-Lingual Corpus of the Inscriptions from Alexander to Muhammad</i> , vol. I: <i>Jerusalem</i> , p. 1., Berlin 2010
CIL	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum</i>
DHGE	<i>Dictionnaire d'histoire et de géographie ecclésiastiques</i> , Turnhout 1912–
EncIr	<i>Encyclopaedia Iranica</i> , London 1985–
EncIs	<i>Encyclopaedia of Islam</i> ,
FGrHist	F. Jacoby, <i>Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker</i> , Leiden 1950–
GEDSH	S. Brock et al., <i>Gorgias Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Syriac Heritage</i> , Piscataway 2011
Geog.	Strabo, <i>Geography</i>
Geogr.	Ptolemy, <i>Geography</i>
ILS	H. Dessau, <i>Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae</i> , Berlin 1892–1916

LSJ	H.G. Liddell, R. Scott, H.S. Jones 1996: <i>A Greek-English Lexicon Compiled by Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, Revised and Augmented Throughout by Sir Henry Stuart Jones with the Assistance of Roderick McKenzie and with the Cooperation of Many Scholars, with a Revised Supplement</i> , Oxford.
MX	<i>Moses Khorenats'i: History of the Armenians</i> , transl. and comm. by R.W. Thomson, Cambridge, Mass. – London (1st edition 1978, 2nd edition 2006).
OLD	P.G.W. Glare, <i>Oxford Latin Dictionary</i> , Oxford 1968–
PT	<i>Palestinian Talmud</i>
RE	<i>Paulys Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft</i> , Stuttgart 1894–1972
RE S	<i>Paulys Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft Supplementbände</i> 1xv, Stuttgart 1903–1978
SEG	<i>Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum</i> , Leiden 1923–
THLL	<i>Theasaurus Linguae Latinae</i> , Leipzig 1904–

Introduction

In recent decades, there has been considerable growth of scholarly interest in the history and culture of the ancient Near East in Hellenistic, Roman, and Partho-Sasanian times (see Figure 1). This interest applies not only to the great political powers (the Seleucids, *Imperium Romanum*, the Parthians, and the Sasanians), but also to the many smaller geopolitical entities that had existed in this area for centuries. The history and culture of such small geopolitical entities (sometimes labeled as *regna minora*) is a highly interesting topic for research on several different levels. First, on the political level, the Mesopotamian *regna minora* were in fact squeezed between two competing superpowers for most of their history. This geopolitical situation afforded them extraordinary political significance that they may not have otherwise had (based on their own manpower and military potential alone). Second, it is important to note that the Mesopotamian *regna minora* frequently straddled important communication routes (significant to both military and trade) connecting the East and the West. Consequently, the question as to which state had control over strategically important river crossings or mountain passes was of great importance to the major political players in the region (as was the political standing of that state). Lastly, squeezed between two culturally distinct superpowers of the era and located along important communication lines, these frontier countries frequently featured highly distinctive local cultures that escape any comprehensive labeling, especially based on the strict “classical” categories of Greco-Roman versus barbarian cultures.¹

Sadly, the general geographic area of interest for this study has recently witnessed the rise of the so-called Islamic State and its destructive influence on the cultural heritage of the Mesopotamian region. Ancient artifacts of great historical importance from Nineveh, Nimrud, Hatra, and Palmyra (among many other sites) have been irrevocably destroyed by Islamic militants as impious objects. This lamentable loss should make us aware of the necessity of documentation and research on this culturally rich, but politically instable, region.

Recent scholarship has yielded many valuable publications, including monographic studies, on countries such as Charakene, Palmyra, Dura-Europos,

1 See Canepa 2007, who, in speaking about Kommagene's culture, rightly remarks that the artistic products of Kommagene may appear to be “megalomaniacal curiosities or barbarous departures” from the paradigm as defined by “the Winkelmann canon.”

Hatra, Edessa, Kommagene, Kappadokia, Armenia, and Media-Atropatene,² but, remarkably, several other *regna minora* have not attracted enough attention from scholars to date. Three northern Mesopotamian *regna minora* in particular, Sophene, Gordyene, and Adiabene, should be mentioned in this regard. In this context, a research project at the University of Rzeszów, financed by the National Science Center in Poland, was launched in 2012 with the aim of filling this gap in recent scholarship. Several detailed studies on the historical geography and material culture of the region have been published within this research project,³ and the present book has been prepared as the first-ever full-scale monograph on Sophene, Gordyene, and Adiabene.⁴ Although each of these countries had its own distinctive history and culture, they all bordered each other and, being located within one region, were all part of many political events and cultural waves over the course of the Hellenistic, Roman, and Partho-Sasanian periods. Therefore, it seems appropriate to examine the history and culture of Sophene, Gordyene, and Adiabene together; doing so should also provide us with a broader regional perspective.

As far as the state of the research is concerned, the history and culture of Adiabene has been explored more comprehensively than that of Sophene and Gordyene. Adiabene appears in modern scholarship mainly in one of two contexts: in the conversion of the Adiabene royal dynasty to Judaism in the first century CE, and in Roman-Partho-Sasanian relationships.

The first topic has always brought a lot of attention to Adiabene, and many papers have been published especially on three specific aspects of the conversion of the Adiabene dynasty: first, Josephus' main passage about 1st-century-CE Adiabene (*Ant.* 20.17–96, widely known as the Adiabene Narrative);⁵ second, Rabbinic references to royal converts from Adiabene;⁶ third, physical remains of the royal converts in Jerusalem, especially the Mausoleum of Queen

2 Pani 1972 (Kappadokia, Armenia, Media Atropatene); Schottky 1989 (Media-Atropatene and Armenia); Dirven 1999 (Dura-Europos and Palmyra); Schuol 2000 (Charakene); U. Hartmann 2001 (Palmyra); Kaizer 2002 (Palmyra); Sommer 2005 (Palmyra, Edessa, Dura-Europos, and Hatra); Facella 2006 (Kommagene); Gawlikowski 2010 (Palmyra); Dirven 2013 (Hatra).

3 Marciak 2012a; Marciak 2012b; Marciak 2013a; Marciak 2013b; Marciak 2014a; Marciak 2014b; Marciak 2014c; Marciak 2014d; Marciak 2016a; Marciak 2016b; Marciak 2017.

4 The papers have been prepared as preliminary studies, and much of their content has been revised and is included here.

5 Täubler 1904, 62–65; Schalit 1965, 171–176; Schalit 1973, 381–392; Colpe 1974, 97–108; N.G. Cohen 1975–76, 30–37; Schiffman 1987, 293–312; Frenschkowski 1990, 213–233; D.R. Schwartz 1996, 263–282; Broer 1994, 133–162; Rajak 1998; Fowler 2010, 72–73.

6 Derenbourg 1867, 224–229; Brüll 1874, 74–80; Gafni 1970–71, 204–212; Barish 1983, 97–157; Schiffman 1987, 298–302; Kalmin 2010. Many encyclopedia entries are heavily dependent

Helena⁷ and the remains of three palaces that once belonged to various members of the royal dynasty (Helena, Monobazos II, and Grapte).⁸ Importantly, two PhD dissertations, only of one which was published recently, have been devoted to royal converts from Adiabene.⁹

Much less attention has been devoted to Adiabene in the Parthian-Sasanian context. In this context, we may tentatively distinguish two categories of publications connected with Adiabene: first, one may find many references to Adiabene in studies on Roman-Parthian-Sasanian conflicts,¹⁰ but this group usually includes only short references to Adiabene made in passing; second, there are detailed studies on some aspects of Adiabene, but this group of publications is not large. When it comes to detailed studies, several scholars should be mentioned. The studies of J.T. Milik, J. Teixidor, and E. Lipiński were devoted to the data from Hatra that may be associated with Adiabene;¹¹ Adiabene also appeared occasionally in S. Hauser's publications on Ashur and Hatra;¹² the publications of M. Eiland and (especially) J. Reade on material remains from Nineveh (an important city of Adiabene) related the results of their studies to the political history of Adiabene at large;¹³ J. Neusner (in the footsteps of

on Rabbinic references, see Hamburger 1883, 373–374, 556–557, 802; Geyer 1935; Gafni 2007; Rappaport 2007; Schalit 2007; Schalit, Gibson 2007.

- 7 For an overview, see Vincent, Steve 1954, 346–362; Vermes, Millar, Goodman 1986, 164, n. 6; Bieberstein, Blodhoern 1994a, 153–157; Hachlili 2005, 121, 168–170; Küchler 2007, 985–995; Kloner, Zissu 2007, 231–234. Detailed studies include de Saulcy 1865a, 345–410; de Saulcy 1865b, 309–322; Kon 1947. A new report on *Le Tombeau des Rois* by J.-S. Caillou is expected soon (see Murphy-O'Connor 2010, 1819).
- 8 For an overview, see Vincent, Steve 1954, 235–236 and Bieberstein, Bloedhorn 1994b, 397. Detailed studies include Mazar 1978, 236–237; Ben-Ami, Tchekhanovetz 2011a; Ben-Ami, Tchekhanovetz 2011b.
- 9 Barish 1983 and Marciak 2014a. Mr. A. Rabin, who has himself been preparing a PhD dissertation about *Ant.* 20.17–96 as Josephus' literary product (supervised by M. Goodman at Oxford), informed me in an email on November 16, 2013 that another dissertation on Adiabene may have been completed in Chicago in the 1950s.
- 10 Debevoise 1938, 51, 71, 75, 165–178, 196–197, 225–233; Dillemann 1962, 112, 268–272, 276–286; Pigulevskaja 1963, 64–70; Ziegler 1964, 45–96; Widengren 1957, 200–201; Dąbrowa 1983, 118–124; Schottky 1991, 110–111; Wolski 1993, 88–89, 115–116, 126–127, 179–180; Olbrycht 1997a, 81–100 (esp. 84–85 and n. 13); Rajak 1998, 309–324; Olbrycht 1998a, 177–178; Olbrycht 1998c, 125–126; Dąbrowa 2012, 174.
- 11 Milik 1962, 51–58; Teixidor 1967–68, 1–11; Lipiński 1982.
- 12 See Hauser 1994, esp. 564–573 (which is his PhD dissertation, defended at the Freie Universität Berlin; unfortunately, it is available only as a microfilm or print-out in the FUB libraries), and Hauser 2011, 144–147.
- 13 Eiland 1996; Eiland 1998; Reade 1998; Reade 1998–2001; Reade 1999; Reade 2001.

N. Brüll and H. Graetz¹⁴) summarized the chronological data about Adiabene in the first century CE¹⁵ and also proposed an extremely speculative reconstruction of the political situation of the kingdom of Adiabene in the first century CE;¹⁶ lastly, the single items of the royal coinage of Adiabene published by F. de Callataÿ and D. Klose,¹⁷ as well as several other short papers by G. Le Rider, H. Seyrig, K. Butcher, and O. Hoover concerning local coinage (“Natounia or Natounissarokerta coins”) from the region, may also be mentioned in this regard.¹⁸

In turn, most of the archaeological data from the region comes from only a few well-known sites, especially Nineveh, Ashur, and Nimrud, which were explored mainly in the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century. Only in recent decades have some changes been observable in this regard. First, important data on the rural landscape of the Nineveh region was brought to light by archaeological investigations conducted in northwestern Iraq in the 1980s (see Figure 2).¹⁹ Second, the recent period of stability in the Kurdish autonomous region in northern Iraq brought modern archaeology into full bloom; however, most archaeological campaigns were at the early stages before 2017 (see Figure 3).²⁰ It can only be hoped that the security situation in the region will not hinder modern archaeology and that new archaeological research will shed more light on Adiabene and this region in the future.

The current author’s 2014 book also contributes to the research on Adiabene, although it focuses more on the Jewish rather than the Parthian-Sasanian context.²¹ In sketching the broader cultural background of royal converts from Adiabene, the study’s chronological span mainly covers the period from the late first century BCE to the early third century CE.²² In this context, the

14 Brüll 1874, 65–72; Graetz 1877, 241–255.

15 A chronological overview is also offered by Schottky 2004.

16 Neusner 1964a; Neusner 1964b; Neusner 1966; Neusner 1969, 61–73.

17 De Callataÿ 1996, 135–145; Klose 1992, 1982. In turn, Hendin 2001, 453–455 and Tameanko 2005, 16–25 are dependent on Klose 1992.

18 Seyrig 1955; Milik 1962, 51–58; Le Rider 1967, 4–20, pl. III–IV; Butcher 1991; Hoover 2009, 161–165; Loeschner 2011; Marciak 2013b.

19 For a good overview, see Ball 1996, 415–416.

20 An exhaustive overview is offered by Kopanias, MacGinnis, Ur 2015.

21 See its reviews by Atkinson 2015; Jacobsen 2015; Kettenhofen 2015; Lipiński 2015; Nodet 2015.

22 Kettenhofen 2015: “Das Buch kann noch weniger eine Geschichte der Adiabene liefern, da es lediglich die Geschichte des zum Judentum konvertierten Königshauses in die kulturelle und politische Welt der hellenistischen und parthischen Adiabene einzuordnen versucht.”

current study aims to exclusively engage with the Mesopotamian context of Adiabene and to fully discuss the history and culture of Adiabene from the second century BCE until the early seventh century CE.²³

As far as the state of research on Sophene and Gordyene is concerned, no comprehensive study on these kingdoms has ever been published, either. In fact, only a few small-scale publications directly devoted to these kingdoms may be referenced. For both kingdoms, there exist a number of lexicon entries,²⁴ and short paragraphs can also be found in general treatments of the history or historical geography of the region.²⁵ Furthermore, in the case of Sophene, the short papers of T. Frankfort and B. Gagliardi attempted to understand the role of this country in the context of Rome's imperial policy in the East,²⁶ and E. Wheeler summarized much of Sophene's history (especially between 63 BCE and 298 CE), also briefly touching on its cultural profile.²⁷

In fact, Sophene and Gordyene are usually only mentioned in scholarship in passing or as an aside to other topics. Such references are typically made in the context of two topics: conflicts of the Roman-Parthian-Sasanians, and the history of Armenia. In the first case, scholars dealing with Roman military campaigns and the shifting Roman frontier mainly focus their attention on the region during the period that saw the Romans achieve considerable territorial gains in the late third century CE (the peace of Diocletian in 298 CE). At that time, the countries in question officially came under the Roman sphere of influence and were referred to as the *Transtigritani* or *Transtigritanae regiones* (*gentes*) in ancient sources.²⁸ This aspect of scholarly interest in the region is later passed on to scholars dealing with Byzantine-Sasanian campaigns and Emperor Justinian I's reorganization of imperial provinces in the East.²⁹ In the second case, there are numerous publications in the field of Armenian studies that refer to Sophene (and much less frequently to Gordyene) in the context of Armenian history and culture, but the publications of H. Hübschmann,

23 An important overview was published by A. Luther in 2015.

24 Weissbach 1927b and Kessler 2001 (Sophene); Baumgartner 1912 and Wiesehöfer 1998 (Gordyene); Garsoïan 1989, 456–458 (for Sophene), 473–475 (for Gordyene); Schottky 2004 (Adiabene, Sophene, and Gordyene).

25 Kahrstedt 1950, 58–70; Dillemann 1962, 110–112, 116–121; Sullivan 1990, 105–112; Syme 1995, 51–57.

26 Frankfort 1963; Gagliardi 2002–2003.

27 Wheeler 2002.

28 Honigsmann 1935; Ensslin 1942; Chaumont 1969; Felix 1985; Winter 1989; Chrysos 1993; Mosig-Walburg 2009.

29 Toumanoff 1963; Adontz, Garsoïan 1970; Preisler-Kapeller 2001.

J. Markwart, N. Garsoïan, and R. Hewsen are most worthy of attention.³⁰ Likewise, most scholars treat the subject of the Hellenistic coinage of the kingdom of Sophene (and Kommagene) as a subtopic of the coinage of Greater Armenia.³¹

In the past few decades, new data on the material culture of the region has systematically come to light through fieldwork undertaken in south-eastern Turkey. Modern archaeology in the Upper Euphrates and Tigris region was instigated in the twentieth century by dam construction projects (see Figures 4–7). During the 1960s, several salvage projects were conducted along the courses of the Euphrates and the Tigris and their tributaries. First, from 1966 to 1974 the Keban Project was focused on a number of sites along the Euphrates in the Tunceli and Elazığ provinces and as such revealed new data from the territory that had once formed the very center of Hellenistic Sophene.³² Second, the Lower Euphrates Project, conducted from 1975 to 1988, preceded the construction of two dams, the Karakaya and Atatürk Dams; in this case, only some sites located to the north of the project area are relevant to the territory of ancient Sophene.³³ Third, an important survey was conducted in the 1980s by an international team under the direction of G. Algaze;³⁴ part of his research was later continued within the scope of the Ilısu Salvage Project. The Salvage Project of the Archaeological Heritage of the Ilısu and Carchemish Dam Reservoirs started in 1998. In this case, it is only the Ilısu Dam Project that concerns our area of interest; it actually includes the building of two dams, the Ilısu Dam and the Cizre Dam,³⁵ and as such proves useful for examining the historical territories of Sophene (its easternmost parts) and Gordiyene (with its western neighbor, Arzanene).

30 Hübschmann 1904; Markwart 1930; Garsoïan 1971; Hewsen 1983; Hewsen 1984; Hewsen 1985; Hewsen 1988–89; Garsoïan 1989; Garsoïan 1992; Garsoïan 1997; Hewsen 2001, 37; Hewsen 2002a; Hewsen 2002b.

31 Bedoukian 1985; Nercessian 1995; Nercessian 2006; Nercessian 2011. The publication of F.L. Kovacs, *Armenian Coinage in the Classical Period* (Classical Numismatic Studies 10), Lancaster, PA, 2016 came out too late (it was still unavailable to me on November 30, 2016) for this publication to be included.

32 See Pekman 1970; Pekman 1971; Pekman 1972; McNicoll 1973; Pekman 1974; Pekman 1976; Pekman 1979; Mitchell 1980; Pekman 1982; McNicoll, 1983; Mitchell 1998.

33 See Özdoğan 1977; Serdaroglu 1977; Pekman, Günay 1987.

34 See Algaze 1989; Algaze, Breuninger, Lightfoot, Rosenberg 1991; Algaze, Hammer, Parker 2012.

35 See Numan, Öztürk 1999; Numan, Öztürk, Velibeyoğlu 2000; Numan, Velibeyoğlu 2002; Numan, Öztürk, Velibeyoğlu 2004; Numan, Doonan 2011.

The extent of archaeological excavations in southeastern Turkey has been predetermined by the location of the projected impact areas of the construction projects. At the same time, excavations of other sites whose existence is not threatened by dam projects have been minimal, and, in the case of the historical territories of Sophene and Gordyene, are not at all relevant. In this light, one cannot underestimate the role of the on-the-spot examinations of sites (archaeological prospection) undertaken by modern (and medieval) travelers.³⁶ In this case, it is especially T. Sinclair's recent research throughout much of southeastern Turkey that proves indispensable to any study of material remains in the region.³⁷ Likewise, the latest research by A. Comfort on Roman roads and bridges in the Mesopotamian area has yielded many interesting discoveries of Roman remains in the region.³⁸

Given the current state of the research, it is warranted to fill the gap of modern scholarship by providing the first-ever comprehensive study of the history and culture of three *regna minora* of northern Mesopotamia: Sophene, Gordyene, and Adiabene. The study of each of these countries will consist of three parts. The first part will be devoted to their historical geography (Sophene: chapter 1; Gordyene: chapter 4; Adiabene: chapter 7); its aim will be to determine the original territory of the country and all of its possible geopolitical developments. To inquire into the location of an enigmatic kingdom is an important task, as the results of such an inquiry will predetermine the choice of the territory whose material remains will be taken into account as evidence of the cultural landscape.³⁹ Accordingly, the second part of the study is intended to collect and interpret all of the available data of cultural importance from the relevant territory (Sophene: chapter 2; Gordyene: chapter 5; Adiabene: chapter 8). Lastly, the third part of the study lays out the political history of each given country (Sophene: chapter 3; Gordyene: chapter 6; Adiabene: chapter 9). Each chapter (i.e., historical geography, cultural landscape, political history) will end with a summary and conclusions.

At the conclusion of the entire study (chapter 10), we will again take a look at the history and culture of Sophene, Gordyene, and Adiabene, but this time

36 A long (and possibly exhaustive) list of early and modern travelers is given by Comfort 2009, 277–289.

37 Sinclair 1989.

38 Comfort 2009.

39 The term *cultural landscape* is broadly understood as a result of the interaction between humankind and its natural environment, following the definition of the World Heritage Convention. For the use of this term in ancient history, see Edwards, Gadd, Hammond 1970, 35. Another term, *cultural environment* is also used as a synonym in this study.

in a broader regional context and from the perspective of three frequently debated general issues.

First, scholars have long debated about the structure of the Seleucid Empire especially in the context of its final disintegration.⁴⁰ The fall of the Seleucid kingdom has been attributed to various issues, from inherent weakness to military defeats (at the hand of the Parthians and the Romans), and dynastic instability in the second century BCE to the destructive influence of the rise of centrifugal tendencies in Seleucid satrapies. As the status of Sophene, Gordyene, and Adiabene most likely switched from Seleucid satrapies to independent monarchies in the third and second centuries BCE, it is important to place our evidence related to these countries in the broader international perspective of the dissolution of the Seleucid state.

Second, the countries of Sophene, Gordyene, and Adiabene are most frequently called (lesser) kingdoms, but their kings and rulers acknowledged the suzerainty of yet another king—the Arsacid ruler of the Parthian kingdom. What is more, at different periods of their histories, these countries rose in importance on the international scene (especially Adiabene in the first century CE). These alleged contradictions confuse many scholars. Should we speak about these kingdoms as independent, semi-independent, or subordinate? These questions belong to a long-debated discussion on the structure of the Parthian kingdom and the nature of the suzerainty of the Arsacid rulers,⁴¹ and we will refer to this debate in the final summary.

Third, in recent decades, there has been a considerable amount of growth in scholarly interest on the impact of the Roman Empire on the ancient Near East.⁴² Among other things, this interest applies to a fierce political and military competition between the Roman Empire and the kingdoms of the Parthians and, later, the Sasanians, whose empires arose in the first century BCE and lasted until the Arab conquests in the seventh century CE. While the results of single battles and campaigns are usually clear, the long-term political and cultural impact of this contest (as well as several less-evident aspects of “tugging the table”) is still a matter of discussion. Therefore, we will also turn our attention to the history and culture of Sophene, Gordyene, and Adiabene in the context of the Roman-Iranian struggles and the final Roman success in this competition in northern Mesopotamia.

40 For an overview, see Sherwin-White, Kuhrt 1993, 217–229; Wolski 1999, 7–17; Erickson, Ramsey 2011, 13–18.

41 See Chaumont 1975; Widengren 1965; Wolski 1989; de Jong 2013; Fowler 2010; B. Jacobs 2010b; U. Hartmann 2015.

42 Millar 1993; Sartre 2005; Butcher 2003; Hekster, Kaizer 2011; Ball 2015.

PART 1

Sophene



Historical Geography of Sophene¹

1.1 Strabo

Strabo's references to Sophene in his *magnum opus Geographika* (*Geography*, hereinafter *Geog.*) can tentatively be divided into two groups. The first group includes brief references to Sophene made in the context of general descriptions of large geographical areas in the ancient Near East. In this context, Sophene is mentioned in relation to other geographical or ethnographical entities, especially countries, rivers, mountain ranges and peaks, and peoples (*Geog.* 11.12.3–4; 11.14.2; 12.2.1). The second group includes passages in a political context in which Strabo speaks about political events and in doing so, mentions Sophene and its territory (*Geog.* 11.14.5; 11.14.12; 11.14.15).

In *Geog.* 11.12.3 Strabo describes the courses of the Euphrates and Tigris rivers. He does so by naming countries located along the course of each river:²

[Euphrates] “flows towards the west through Greater Armenia, as it is called, to Lesser Armenia, having the latter on its right and Akilisene on the left. It then bends towards the south, and at its bend joins the boundaries of Kappadokia; and leaving these and the region of Kommagene on the right, and Akilisene and Sophene in Greater Armenia on the left, it runs on to Syria and again makes another bend into Babylonia and the Persian Gulf”.

This passage shows (see Figure 1) that Sophene was located along the course of the Euphrates, on its left (eastern) bank; Sophene's neighbor to the north was Akilisene, still on the same eastern bank of the Euphrates. Sophene was also located near Kappadokia and Kommagene in the west, but not contiguously, as it was separated from its western neighbors by the Euphrates. Lastly, it should be noted that in geographical terms Sophene can be seen as a distinctive part of Greater Armenia.

1 This chapter is a rewritten version of Marciak 2012a.

2 H.L. Jones 1928, 296–297.

In turn, Strabo describes in *Geog.* 11.12.4 the extension of the Tauros Mountains (see Figures 8–9). In doing so, he mentions several countries, the borders of which are marked by the presence of this impressive massif:³

Now the Tauros has numerous branches towards the north, one of which is that of the Antitauros, as it is called, for there too the mountain which encloses Sophene in a valley situated between itself and the Tauros was so named ... [the mountains] on the far side of the Euphrates, in their extent towards the east from Kappadokia and Kommagene, are, at their beginning, called Tauros proper, which separates Sophene and the rest of Armenia from Mesopotamia; by some, however, these are called the Gordyaeon Mountains, and among these belongs also Masion, the mountain which is situated above Nisibis and Tigranokerta. Then the Tauros rises higher and bears the name Niphates; and somewhere here are the sources of the Tigris, on the southern side of the mountainous country. Then from the Niphates the mountain chain extends still farther and farther and forms the mountain Zagros which separates Media and Babylonia.

In *Geog.* 11.12.4 we get two valuable hints at the location of Sophene. First, Sophene and Armenia are separated from Mesopotamia by the Tauros Mountains (see Figures 1, 8–9). In this sense, Sophene appears to be located west (and not east) of the Tauros. Secondly, and more importantly, Strabo introduces us to another important geographical feature of this region of the Near East: the northern extensions of the Tauros, one of which is called the Antitauros Mountains. Remarkably, Strabo locates Sophene between the Antitauros and the Tauros mountains, and its area is denoted as a “valley” (ἐν αὐλῶνι).⁴ In this light, Sophene is not a mountainous region, but a country that occupies a flat area clearly limited in its extent by mountain ranges and rivers.

Roughly speaking, the Tauros Mountains are a massive mountain range running east-west from the Aegean coast in Lykia, along the northern side of the Arabian platform, to the far-easterly fringes of modern Turkey (where it continues as the Zagros Mountains in Iran).⁵ For our purposes, it is the eastern part of the Tauros that is relevant (see Figures 8–9). This section begins

3 H.L. Jones 1928, 298–299.

4 For the meaning of αὐλῶν see *LSJ* 277.

5 For the geography of southeastern Turkey (especially its orography), see Dewdney 1971, 15–33 (esp. 23–25) and Beaumont, Blake, Wagstaff 1988, 19–34. Concerning the eastern Tauros, see

east of the Euphrates River and runs easterly along the northern edge of the Mesopotamian plain.⁶ In turn, generally speaking, the name Antitauros is often used for northern extensions of the Tauros, reaching as far as the Pontic mountains;⁷ several such mountain ranges can be named: the modern Ahtali, Tecer, Munzur, and Dilubeli Mountains.⁸ However, only the Munzur Mountains fit Strabo's description, as this mountain range stretches east of the Euphrates. Consequently, the Antitauros range, which is mentioned by Strabo in *Geog.* 11.12.4 as the border of Sophene, must be identified as the modern Munzur Mountains.⁹

A passage similar to Strabo's description of the Tauros in *Geog.* 11.12.4 can be found in *Geog.* 11.14.2, in which Strabo goes on to focus on the relation between Tauros, Masion, and Antitauros:¹⁰

the Tauros takes a new beginning on the far side of the Euphrates opposite Kommagene and Melitene, countries formed by that river, Mt. Masion is the mountain which lies above the Mygdonians of Mesopotamia on the south, in whose country is Nisibis, whereas Sophene is situated in the northern parts, between Masion and Antitauros. The Antitauros takes its beginning at the Euphrates and the Tauros and ends towards the eastern parts of Armenia, thus on one side enclosing; the middle of Sophene, and having on its other side Akilisene, which is situated between the Antitauros and the river-land of the Euphrates, before that river bends towards the south. The royal city of Sophene is Karkathiokerta (Καρκαθιόκερτα).

The interpretation of *Geog.* 11.14.2 is controversial. At face value, two geographical notions of Sophene can be inferred from *Geog.* 11.14.2: first, that Sophene is located between the Antitauros Mountains and Mt. Masion, and second, that the Antitauros Mountains separate Sophene and Akilisene, i.e., the middle (μέση)¹¹ of Sophene and Akilisene.

Hewsen 2001, 15 and Sinclair 1994–95, 216–217. A general overview of ancient data on the Tauros can be found in Praechter 1934, 49–50.

6 For a very clear picture of the Tauros' eastern extension, see Dillemann 1962, 39, fig. 3.

7 Magie 1950, 492; Mitford 1989, 331 and fig. 24.1 on p. 333; Hewsen 2001, 15; Radt 2008, 334.

8 Hewsen 2001, 15.

9 Wheeler 2002, 89.

10 H.L. Jones 1928, 318–321.

11 For the meaning of μέση, see *LSJ* 1105.

While in *Geog.* 11.12.4 Strabo locates Sophene between the Antitauros and the Tauros, in *Geog.* 11.14.2 he positions Sophene between the Antitauros and Mt. Masion. What is the difference between the Tauros and Mt. Masion?

If Strabo (at least in *Geog.* 11.14.2) means the closest prominence north (“above”) of the country known as Mygdonia in Mesopotamia with Nisibis as its capital, then it is certainly the belt of limestone hills known locally as Tūr ‘Abdīn and the Mazi Mountains.¹² Remarkably, both modern names feature a great deal of continuity in their nomenclature maintained since ancient times. Therefore, there can be no doubt that the physical equivalent of Strabo’s Masion corresponds to the modern Tūr ‘Abdīn and the Mazi Mountains. However, if in *Geog.* 11.14.2 Strabo’s Masion is to be understood in this way, this implies an extension of Sophene far beyond the eastern Tauros into the Mesopotamian plain. This interpretation may, however, be tentatively reinforced by the fact that Strabo knows of Karkathiokerta (on the name, see chapter 1.2), the royal capital of Sophene. If Strabo’s Karkathiokerta is to be identified with modern-day Eğil (but this is only a tentative identification), then its territory definitely expanded beyond the Tauros.

At the same time, it should be noted that Strabo’s other references to Sophene (most likely *Geog.* 11.12.3 and certainly *Geog.* 11.12.4) set its eastern border at the Tauros, and did not appear to locate Sophene beyond this mountain massif in Mesopotamia. What is more, it has been convincingly argued that Strabo did not really distinguish Mt. Masion from the Tauros, i.e., he considered Mt. Masion to part of the Tauros.¹³ Therefore, Mt. Masion may occasionally function as a *pars pro toto* name for the Tauros.¹⁴ Indeed, it appears that in *Geog.* 11.14.2 Mt. Masion serves as a synonym for a certain part of the eastern Tauros that extend roughly from modern Ergani to Bitlis (Strabo also gives names to other parts of this mountain massif located further east, e.g. Niphates).¹⁵ To sum up, it appears that the core of Strabo’s Sophene was located only west of the Tauros. At the same time, one might perhaps argue that some traces of Sophene’s expansion over this mountain range echo in some of Strabo’s geographical passages when the great geographer mentions Mt. Masion. If so, perhaps Strabo’s expression the middle (μέση) of Sophene can be seen as the key to the solution of some ambiguity in Strabo’s texts. It indicates the core of Sophene, located west of the Tauros (and this geopoliti-

12 Dillemann 1962, 39, fig. 3; Sinclair 1994–95, 189.

13 Syme 1995, 46–50; likewise Sinclair 1989, 362; Sinclair 1994–95, 217.

14 Syme 1995, 48.

15 Syme 1995, 48.

cal identity is usually referred to in Strabo's texts), but neither does it exclude Sophene's expansion beyond the Tauros on to the Mesopotamian plain.

Another problem is as to how understand Strabo's Antitauros. Given Strabo's phrase about the Antitauros ending towards the eastern parts of Armenia, many scholars equate the Antitauros with the eastern Tauros, which starts east of the Euphrates and continues further eastwards along the northern marches of Mesopotamia.¹⁶ If so, Sophene spreads eastwards of the actual Tauros (roughly from modern Ergani to Nusaybin). There are, however, two specific reasons to reject this interpretation of *Geog.* 11.14.2. First of all, the key element is the mention of Akilisene. For all we know about this country, it did not occupy the territory immediately west of the Tauros (northwest of Hazar Gölü), but was located around modern Erzincan.¹⁷ Thus, the Antitauros, which borders Akilisene, must be located much more in the north than the mountain range that crosses over today's Ergani. Second, in other places in his narrative, Strabo clearly sees the Antitauros as a group of northern extensions of the Tauros (*Geog.* 11.12.4), which reach as far as the Black Sea.¹⁸ Thus, Strabo's Antitauros must be identified with the modern Munzur Mountains and not with the eastern Tauros itself.

Lastly, a brief reference to Sophene with regard to Melitene, part of Kappadokia, can be found in *Geog.* 12.2.1:¹⁹

It is situated opposite Sophene; and the Euphrates River flows between it and Kommagene, which later borders on it. On the far side of the river is a noteworthy fortress belonging to the Kappadokians, Tomisa by name. This was sold to the ruler of Sophene for one hundred talents, but later was presented by Lucullus as a meed of valor to the ruler of Kappadokia who took the field with him in the war against Mithradates.

At face value, *Geog.* 12.2.1 only makes the data mentioned in *Geog.* 11.12.3 more precise: Sophene bordered Kappadokia across the Euphrates, to be more precise, Sophene bordered the part of Kappadokia called Melitene. However, one cannot overestimate the mention of Tomisa, which was well known

16 Mitchell 1980, 9–10; Sherwin-White 1984, 184; Facella 2006, Comfort 2009, 9. This nomenclature fails to adequately explain *Geog.* 11.14.2, especially the location of Akilisene (which, following Mitchell 1980, 9, would most bizarrely be placed “north of Hazar Gölü, including the Altınova, the valley of the Murat and the Munzur Mountains”).

17 Garsoïan 1989, 461; Hewsén 2001, 37.

18 Hewsén 2001, 15.

19 H.L. Jones 1928, 350–351.

in Hellenistic times (see *Geog.* 14.2.29 and Polyb. 34.13, both of which mention Eratosthenes as their source) as one of the major crossing points of the Euphrates between the West and the East, especially on the route towards India. It should be stressed that Strabo's phrase "on the far side of the Euphrates" (τὰ πέρα τοῦ Εὐφράτου) must be understood from the perspective of someone (Strabo and his public) living west of the Euphrates. Therefore, the phrase refers to the left bank; consequently, Tomisa was located on the east bank of the Euphrates.²⁰

Summing up Strabo's references to Sophene, all of which are entirely geographical in character, the location of the heartland of Sophene was marked by three natural landmarks: the Euphrates, the Antitauros (Munzur Mountains), and the eastern Tauros. This area roughly matches the territory of two modern Turkish provinces: the western part of Tunceli (historically also known as the Dersim region) and Elazığ. Both provinces are nowadays separated by the river (known as Arsianias in ancient times and as the lower Euphrates or Murat rivers in modern times). This natural border currently rose to a more significant barrier after the construction of the Keban Dam reservoirs. Furthermore, it appears that some traces of Sophene's extension over the Tauros on to the Mesopotamian plain (Masion Mountains) can be argued.

Given the fact that the Greek form Σωφηνή is derived from the name of the pre-Hellenistic geopolitical entity *Şuppa*, *Şuppani*,²¹ the question arises as to how Strabo's location of Sophene corresponds to the location of pre-Hellenistic *Şuppa*.

The land of *Şuppa* (also known as *Işuwa* to the Hittites) is sometimes referred to in Hittite sources (the Boğazköy archives) and Assyrian sources in the context of military conflicts over the Euphrates region between the Hittites and Mitanni; between the Hittites and Assyria; and between Assyria and Urartu.²² It is widely held that topographical indications in the written sources suggest that the land of *Şuppa*/*Işuwa* was located between the Euphrates River, the Murat River, and the Tigris sources.²³ Furthermore, it is argued that the discovery of large quantities of seals (bearing names of rulers of *Işuwa*) in the Keban Project sites, especially in Koructepe, Norşunetepe and Tepecik, point to the location of the very center of *Şuppa* in the Altınova plain south of the

20 Similarly Eckhardt 1910a, 82; Wheeler 1991, 506, n. 7. By contrast, see Weissbach 1927b, 1016: "auf dem kappadokischen Ufer des Euphrat".

21 Levy 1965, 307, n. 10; Salvini 1972, 105–107; Forlanini 2004, 410 and n. 30; Barjamovic 2011, 129 and nn. 399–340.

22 Hawkins 1998, 281–282.

23 Garstang, Gurney 1959, 40; Hawkins 1998, 281–282; Barjamovic 2011, 129.

Murat River.²⁴ To conclude, it is widely held that the land of Şuppa/Işuwa was located on the east bank of the Euphrates, south of the Murat River, and west of the Tauros Mountains.²⁵

It should be stressed that this location corresponds with the modern Elazığ province, but does not actually include the territory north of the Murat River (the Dersim/Tunceli region and the Arsanias valley to the north of the river). How can this difference be explained? It appears that there are two possible explanations. First, the Hellenistic geopolitical entity, Sophene, included a slightly larger territory than its pre-Hellenistic predecessor, most likely through expansion. Alternatively, one may wonder how precisely the location of pre-Hellenistic Şuppa/Işuwa has been established in modern scholarship. Did Şuppa/Işuwa really not include the territory immediately north of the Murat River?

H. Güterbock made an interesting observation in this regard: seals found in the Keban Project sites did not necessarily have to be produced where they were found and may have come from many other distant places.²⁶ Güterbock's reservations, if correct, may call into the question the location of the center of Işuwa assumed only on the basis of the finding of large quantities of royal seals. However, Güterbock's criticism should not be overestimated. The seals were found in large quantities in the territories that are otherwise attested (in written sources) as belonging to the land of Işuwa. And yet Güterbock's basic assumption has some merits. It is necessary to pay attention to the limitations of the available data. That is to say, the sites south of the Arsanias were acknowledged as the political center of Işuwa because the excavations revealed large quantities of seals there. However, the scope of excavations was predetermined by the planned extent of the water rise resulting from the Keban Dam. The question arises as to whether other sites, for instance, located in the Dersim region, would not have revealed the same quantities of epigraphic data if they had been excavated.

Furthermore, the question of the affiliation of the Dersim region in pre-Hellenistic times is all the more important if we take account of the fact that the area designated as the center of Şuppa/Işuwa by modern Assyriologists (south of the Murat River) would not coincide with Sophene Şahuni (north of the Murat River). In other words, Sophene Şahuni, one of two regions (next to Sophanene) that bore the name Sophene in late-Roman/early-Byzantine times, would not have belonged to Şuppa/Işuwa in pre-Hellenistic times. This

²⁴ Hawkins 1998, 281–282.

²⁵ Garstang, Gurney 1959, 40; Hawkins 1998, 281–282; Barjamovic 2011, 129.

²⁶ Güterbock 1973, 136.

would be striking especially if we understand the term Šahuni as “royal” and consequently indicating the area once connected with royal power in Sophene. This is, of course, theoretically possible. We may assume that the elites of the territory north of the Murat River (the Dersim region and the Arsianias valley to the north of the river) became attached to its mighty southern neighbor before the Hellenistic period, and, so to speak, became Sophenean (in political and cultural terms) in the Hellenistic period when Sophene emerged on the political scene as the kingdom. Later, however, the Elazığ region (Anzitene) developed its own cultural and political distinctiveness, while the connection with the Hellenistic kingdom of Sophene was more recognizable for the Dersim region (and the Arsianias valley to the north of the river), which remained to be known as Sophene (Ptolemy, the Byzantine legal codifications) or Sophene Šahuni (the *Epic Histories*). However, it appears that it is more likely to think about the aforementioned process of the development of regional distinctiveness in late-Roman/early-Byzantine times if we assume that the Dersim region and the Arsianias valley to the north of the river also belonged to the pre-Hellenistic Şuppa/Işuwa. After all, no other distinctive geopolitical entity is known to have existed immediately north of the Arsianias in the Late Bronze and Iron Age. Moreover, in geographical terms, Anzitene was centered on a long plain (=Altunova or Kharput plain), and its natural northern border comprised the hills that ranged along the Altunova plain's northern edge.²⁷ In this sense, part of the Arsianias valley south of the river (with Koructepe and its seals) geographically tends more towards the Arsianias valley to the north of the river and the Dersim region than towards the Altunova plain.²⁸

Strabo *Geog.* 11.14.12 is the first text that is not entirely geographical in character but brings up the question of political conquest and possession. Namely, in relating about the Argonautic expedition of Jason and his compatriots to retrieve the Golden Fleece from Kolchis, Strabo remarks that

of the followers of Armenos, some took up their abode in Akilisene, which in earlier times was subject to the Sopheni (Σωφηνοί), whereas others took up their abode in Syspirtis, as far as Kalachene and Adiabene, outside the Armenian mountains.²⁹

The nature of this story, which has been classified by scholars as a *Siedlungslegende*, need not concern us here (but see below), but this text aptly

²⁷ Sinclair 1989, 139.

²⁸ Likewise Sinclair 1989, 139.

²⁹ H.L. Jones 1928, 332–333.

parallels Strabo's other references to Sophene and Akilisene. Namely, it makes us aware of the fact that these two countries, Sophene and Akilisene, which in entirely geographical passages function as distinctive entities with borders well marked by natural landmarks, can also politically expand their territories. In this case, Akilisene is reported to have been subdued by Sophene, but only for a time, and in the end, this political episode did not lead to the disappearance of Akilisene as a geographically distinctive region.

A more tangible historical context appears in Strabo's account *Geog.* 11.14.5, where Strabo refers to the reign of the Seleucid King Antiochos III, whose defeat at the hands of the Romans at Magnesia in 190 BC led to the rise of several independent countries in the ancient Near East (for more details, see below). Let us give voice to Strabo himself:³⁰

Artaxias and Zariadres ... reigned as kings (the former as king of Sophene, Amphisene,³¹ Odomantis, and certain other countries, and the latter as king of the country round Artaxata), and jointly enlarged their kingdoms by cutting off for themselves parts of the surrounding nations,—I mean by cutting off Kaspiane and Phaunitis and Basoropeda from the country of the Medes; and the country along the side of Mt. Paryadres and Chorzene and Gogarene, which last is on the far side of the Kyros River, from that of the Iberians; and Karenitis and Xerxene, which border on Lesser Armenia or else are parts of it, from that of the Chalyboi and the Mossynoikoi; and Akilisene and the country round the Antitauros from that of the Kataonoi; and Taronitis from that of the Syrians; and therefore they all speak the same language, as we are told.

Strabo's text describes the expansion of two lesser kingdoms, Sophene and Greater Armenia. When it comes to Sophene (which is the subject of our interest), Strabo clearly makes a distinction between Zariadres' original territory and the territory acquired through expansion.

In the case of Zariadres' original territory, Strabo enumerates Sophene, Amphisene, and Odomantis, as well as "[of] certain other countries" (καὶ ἄλλων τινῶν).

The identification of the key toponyms is highly problematic. The toponym mentioned in the text between Sophene and Odomantis has been read as

30 H.L. Jones 1928, 324–325 with some modifications of toponyms.

31 The reading according to Lasserre 1975, 123 and Radt 2004, 391.

Amphissene (Ἀμφισσῆνη)³² or *Akisene* (Ἀκισσηνή).³³ *Amphissene* is known from Stephen of Byzantium, but it is not attested otherwise, and as such cannot be localized; the other suggested reading, *Akisene* (Ἀκισσηνή), is most likely a corrupted form. Other scholars have suggested several emendations of *Akisene*: *Akilisene* (Ἀκίλισσηνή),³⁴ *Anthisene*,³⁵ and **A(r)kisene*.³⁶

Akilisene, Sophene's well-known neighbor, is perhaps the most straightforward emendation of *Akisene* in linguistic terms, but it cannot be accepted here because this toponym appears among Zariadres' new acquisitions a few lines later.³⁷ In turn, the emendation into *Anthisene* is thought to correspond to Anzitene, a region first mentioned by Ptolemy in *Geogr.* 5.13.18 (and next by George of Cyprus (*Descriptio Orbis Romani* 959), *Leg. Nov.* 31.1.3, and *Cod. Iust.* 1.29.5), and also known from later Armenian sources as *Anjit*.³⁸ Anzitene can be located in today's Kharput plain.³⁹ The problem with this identification is that Anzitene occupied part of the territory otherwise attributed by Strabo to Sophene (understood as between the Euphrates and the Tauros). Lastly, it has been suggested that the right emendation would be **A(r)kisene*, which could be seen as a (otherwise unattested) Greek version of the Armenian toponym *Arka*, which was a town on the west bank of the Euphrates, located some 35 km west of Malatya.⁴⁰ This identification is also problematic, as it assumes continuity between a much later Armenian form and an otherwise unattested Greek version. What is more, it assumes a considerable expansion of Sophene over the Euphrates into Kappadokia.

The identification of Odomantis is likewise an enigma. An emendation of Odomantis into Ogumantis (ΟΓΥΜΑΝΤΙΣ) has been suggested. The latter would correspond to the toponym *Gumathena*, known from Ammianus Marcellinus' *Res Gestae* as a rich region west of Amida (18.9.2).⁴¹ Otherwise, a corrected reading of *Odomandos* or *Oromandos* has been postulated. It would point to *Oromandos* (Ὀρόμανδος), a town in Lesser Armenia known from *Geogr.*

32 Lasserre 1975, 123; Radt 2004, 391.

33 Jones 1928, 324, n. 1.

34 Mehl 2012. See also Jones 1928, 324, n. 1.

35 Stückelberger, Graßhoff 2006, 555. Likewise, Hübschmann 1904, 295 (though with a question mark) and 302.

36 Hewsen 1984, 349.

37 Hewsen 1984, 349.

38 Stückelberger, Graßhoff 2006, 555. Likewise, Hübschmann 1904, 295 and 302.

39 See Hewsen 2001 for his maps nos. 22 and 40.

40 Hewsen 1984, 349.

41 Dillemann 1962, 119: the difference between the *tau* and the *ta* by has been explained by Dillemann as the result of the decline of the nasal sound.

5.7.4. This could consequently provide a hint for *Orbalisene* (Ὀρβαλισσηνή), the southernmost district of Lesser Armenia (attested in *Geogr.* 5.7.1), as a new acquisition of Zariadres.⁴²

Strabo completes the list of Zariadres' original possessions with an enigmatic statement: Zariadres was king "[of] certain other countries" (καὶ ἄλλων τινῶν). This expression is not helpful at all, and it appears to be safer to declare it unidentifiable than to use it as a "catch-all phrase" (as suggested by R. Hewsens⁴³), since such instrumental use may lead to supporting unfounded speculations.

When it comes to new territorial acquisitions of Zariadres, they should first be distinguished from those of Artaxias. On geographical grounds, territorial acquisitions at the expense of Media Atropatene and the Iberians are actually possible as a political enlargement of the home territory only in the case of Greater Armenia. Thus, *Kaspiane* (apparently the Armenian *Kasp'k'* in the Mughan plain), *Phaunitis* (probably *Saunitis, the Armenian *Siwnik'*), *Basoropeda* (possibly *Parasapatene corresponding to the Armenian *Parspatunik'*), the countries along the side of Mt. *Paryadres* (possibly the Armenian *Tayk'*), *Chorzene* (*Cho(la)rzene, the Iberian land of Klarjet'i),⁴⁴ and *Gogarene* (apparently the Armenian *Gugark'*) do not come into play as Sophene's new territorial acquisitions.⁴⁵

In turn, Strabo's *Taronitis* (also read as *Ταρονίτις⁴⁶) is frequently believed to match the Armenian toponym *Tmorik'*,⁴⁷ and, given Strabo's definition of this acquisition as being taken from the Syrians, could be located in the Upper Tigris Valley, perhaps in the mountainous region of Gordyene.⁴⁸ This acquisition is more likely for Artaxias, unless we should assume that Sophene's territorial expansion had already reached so far east by the end of the third and beginning of the second centuries BCE.

42 Hewsens 1984, 349–350. According to Radt 2008, 321 this interpretation is "lautlich gesehen äußerst unwahrscheinlich".

43 Hewsens 1984, 351–352. In turn, Hübschmann 1904, 246 points to "die oberen Tigrisländer."

44 Strabo's *Chorzene* in *Geog.* 11.14.5 can easily be confused with the region bearing the same name in Byzantine sources, *Chorzene* (and in Armenian sources *Khorjean*). However, the distinction must be made on geographical grounds—Armenian *Khorjean* occupied the upper valley of the *Other Gayl* between Asthianene and Karin, while Strabo's *Khorjean* was located close to Iberia. See Toumanoff 1963, 442, n. 22; Hewsens 1984, 353; Hewsens 1985, 73.

45 See Hewsens 1984, 352–354; Hewsens 1985, 72–75.

46 Jones 1928, 324, n. 6; Lasserre 1975, 123.

47 Hübschmann 1904, 213; Hewsens 1988–89, 287; Radt 2008, 322.

48 Hewsens 1984, 354–355; Hewsens 1988–89, 287. Likewise, Hübschmann 1904, 258.

The question as to which of Antiochos' rebellious generals possessed the countries Karenitis and Xerxene on the border of Lesser Armenia is open. It appears that the form Karenitis corresponds very well with the Armenian toponym Karin, i.e., the region around modern Erzurum.⁴⁹ At first sight, the name Xerxene corresponds with the Persian royal name Xerxes, and it is probably a mistaken association (by Strabo, his sources, or later copyists) with the Persian king Xerxes I, which led to the current form.⁵⁰ However, the name must have originally been **Derzene*, which is attested as *Derxene* in Pliny the Elder *HN* 5.20 and as *Derjan* in Armenian, and was used to name the plain along the upper Euphrates west of the Erzurum region.⁵¹ Both countries were conquered by the Chalyboi and the Mosynoikoi, who are known from Xenophon (*Anab.* 5.4–11, 5.4.28–5.4.32) as tribal peoples:⁵² the Chalyboi around modern Erzurum⁵³ and the Mossynoikoi (Μοσσύνιοι) between modern Trapezus and Kotyora.⁵⁴

Although Karenitis and Xerxene do not directly border on new Iberian acquisitions of Artaxias,⁵⁵ they do not lie too far apart and consequently cannot be ruled out as Greater Armenia's new possessions.⁵⁶ At the same time, Karenitis and Xerxene do border directly on Akilisene, Sophene's well-known neighbor. Therefore, Akilisene is more likely as Sophene's new acquisition due to the immediate geographical proximity. What is more, Strabo's statement about Sophene's temporary supremacy over Akilisene could then be connected with Zariadres' expansion (the expression *πρότερον* used in *Geog.* 11.14.12 would then be formulated from Strabo's own perspective, late first century BCE/early first century CE, and did not have to be attributed to the times "before the Argonauts"). What is more, the conquest of all three countries—Akilisene, Karenitis, and Xerxene—would form both a chronically ordered sequence of conquests and a geographically logical line of territorial expansion.

49 Weissbach 1919d, 1939–1940; Hübschmann 1904, 287–290; Adontz, Garsoïan 1970, 43; Hewsen 1984, 354; Radt 2008, 321.

50 Radt 2008, 321–322.

51 Hübschmann 1904, 287; Adontz, Garsoïan 1970, 43; Hewsen 1984, 354; Radt 2008, 321–322.

52 Without Xenophon's descriptions one might wonder whether we have to do here with ethnonyms. *Χάλυβοι* and *Χάλυβες* are mentioned in ancient sources in many different locations in the Near East, and the etymology of this term indicates those who trade in iron ore (as well as gold and silver on occasion). Interestingly, the Black Sea coast area abounded in iron mines. See Ruge 1899, 2099–2100; Bryer 1982, 133–138.

53 Bryer 1982, 136–138; Waterfield 2006, 143, 151; J.W.I. Lee 2007, 34.

54 J.W.I. Lee 2007, 35, 37.

55 See Hewsen 2001, 35, map no. 21.

56 So Hewsen 1984, 354 which is a much more detailed analysis of *Geog.* 11.14.5 than Hewsen 1985, 57, 63 where Karenitis and Xerxene are assumed to be Zariadres' acquisitions.

sion running from west to east.⁵⁷ To sum up, it is more likely that Zariadres subdued Karenitis and Xerxene.

To summarize, *Geog.* 11.14.5 is rich in detail about Sophene's political expansion at the time of Zariadres. However, uncertainty concerning the identification of the key toponyms Amphissene/Akisene and Odomantis prevents us from benefiting from Strabo's testimony. Three interpretations appear to be equally possible, and it is hard to decide unambiguously in favor of only one of them.

First, if Sophene is to be understood in the same way as in Strabo's other passages (the area between the Munzur Mountains and the Tauros), then Amphissene/Akisene cannot be equated with Anzitene (because Anzitene would already be included in the definition of Sophene). If so, Amphissene/Akisene could possibly be identified with the region of Arka, and Odomantis could refer to the region around later Amida (the area of modern-day Diyarbakır). Second, if Amphissene/Akisene is to be understood as Anzitene and (again) Odomantis as the region around later Amida, then we get a very clear picture of Sophene's expansion southeast over the Tauros. In this case, however, one would have to assume that Strabo's use of the term Sophene is not uniform. It may be used both in a broad sense (between the Munzur Mountains and the Tauros) and, exceptionally, in a restricted sense (the area between the Antitauros and the Tauros, but without Anzitene). The use of a restricted sense is not impossible because it could match a much later geographical definition of Sophene Šahuni known from Armenian sources. Third, if the toponyms Amphissene/Akisene and Odomantis should be understood as going back to the Armenian toponyms Arka and Orbalisene, then we would have testimony for a brief but considerable thrust of Sophene into the territory of Kappadokia.⁵⁸

As far as Sophene's northeastern border with Greater Armenia is concerned, although our sources do not provide us with tangible clues, an attempt at sketching Sophene's border in this area can be made indirectly—either on the basis of general considerations concerning the strategic importance of the terrain relief in the region, or, somewhat anachronistically, by accepting the northeastern border of Sophene known from later sources.

In the first case, R. Hewsen suggests that, to be viable, the kingdom of Sophene must have been based on a strongly defensible frontier in the east such as the mountains to the east of Chorzene and Asthianene.⁵⁹ In the second

57 Marciak 2012a, 306.

58 This is the option suggested by Hewsen 1984, 349–350.

59 Hewsen 1984, 358–359.

case, one could perhaps assume that the borders of later Byzantine provinces reflect some stage of Sophene's earlier extension towards Greater Armenia (see below). Here, however, we have at least two options: the district of the *gentes* (527 CE) later (536 CE) renamed as (Justinian I's) *Armenia Quarta* or the *Other Armenia Quarta* (*Descriptio Orbis Romani*, 604 CE). The latter district having a larger territory approximately matches Hewsen's border suggested on geographical and topographical grounds, and also corresponds well with Zariadres' expansion alongside the upper Euphrates attested in Strabo (Akilisene, Karenitis, and Xerxene). Therefore, Hewsen's suggestion can be considered as likely. However, this border line has to be seen as marking the furthest *political* extension of the *kingdom* of Sophene towards Greater Armenia. We can infer from literary sources that this state of successful expansion did not last long (*Geog.* 11.14.15 and Diod. 32.22). It is even Strabo who sees Sophene's sovereignty over Akilisene (not to mention countries more to the east) as belonging to its glorious *past* (*Geog.* 11.14.12: πρότερον "in earlier times"). Likewise, Pompey's campaign in 66 BCE ran through the territory of Akilisene, and we hear nothing of Sophene's influence in this area (see below). In this light, Sophene's extension in the east including Balabitenne and Asthianene (Justinian I's *Armenia Quarta* from 527 and 536 CE) seems to have been more lasting.

1.2 Pliny the Elder

Another important ancient ethnographer who contributes to our knowledge on the historical geography of Sophene is Pliny the Elder.⁶⁰

Only once does Pliny the Elder explicitly mention *Sophene* (*Naturalis Historia* 5.66, hereinafter *HN*), but he locates two important ancient cities in Greater Armenia (*HN* 6.26), which are known from other sources as located in Sophene. What is more, Pliny the Elder also uses the terms *Cepheni* and *Cephenia* (*HN* 6.28, 6.41), which may be connected with Sophene.

60 Before Pliny the Elder, Pomponius Mela (Pomp. Mela 1.53) in the early first century CE briefly mentioned Sophene in his list of Eastern countries: "Syria late litora tenet, terrasque etiam latius introrsus, aliis aliisque nuncupata nominibus: nam et Coele dicitur et Mesopotamia et Damascene et Adiabene et Babylonia et Iudaea et Kommagene et Sophene." Mela's *magnum opus*, *De situ orbis Libri tres* was one of major sources for *Historia naturalis*, as Pliny the Elder admitted himself.

In *HN* 5.66 Pliny the Elder mentions various parts of Syria, which he actually understands as a large geographical area,⁶¹ and in doing so, he recalls Sophene with regard to the Tauros (*Taurus*) and Kommagene (*Commagena*):⁶²

The next country on the coast is Syria, formerly the greatest of lands. It had a great many divisions with different names, the part adjacent to Arabia being formerly called Palaestina, and Judaea, and Hollow Syria, then Phoenicia and the more inland part Damascena, and that still further south Babylonia as well as Mesopotamia between the Euphrates and the Tigris, the district beyond Mount Taurus Sophene, that on this side of Sophene Commagena, that beyond Armenia Adiabene, which was previously called Assyria, and the part touching Cilicia Antiochia.

It is usually held that this text presents the Tauros as the dividing line between Kommagene (*Commagena*) and Sophene: the former lies south of the Tauros; the latter, north of the Tauros.⁶³ This is definitely true for Kommagene,⁶⁴ but, as far as Sophene is concerned, Pliny the Elder uses the verb “*transeo*” which translates as “to go across,” “to cross over,” “to pass through.”⁶⁵ In this light, Sophene crosses over the Tauros, and its territory can be located on either side of this mountain massif.⁶⁶ In other words, Pliny the Elder’s Sophene occupies the Dersim and Elazığ regions, but also reaches further east beyond the Tauros in the direction of modern-day Diyarbakır.

In turn, in *HN* 6.26 Pliny the Elder lists famous cities located “in the Greater Armenia: Arsamosata, near the Euphrates, Argiathicerta near the Tigris, Tigranocerta on an elevated site, and, on a plain adjoining the river Araxes, Artaxata.”⁶⁷

61 For this problem, see Nöldeke 1871 and most recently Rollinger 2006.

62 Rackham 1942, 270–271.

63 Bostock, Riley 1855; Rackham 1942, 270. Likewise Edwell 2008, 11; Hewsen 2001, 42. However, the translation of Winkler 1993, 67 differs considerably from those of Bostock, Riley and Rackham: “... und das Land mehr im Süden heißt auch jetzt noch Babylonien, das zwischen Euphrat und Tigris Mesopotamien und dort, wo es über den Tauros hinausreicht, Sophene, diesseits davon aber Kommagene.”

64 See Edwell 2008, 11; Hewsen 2001, 42.

65 OLD 1962.

66 Marciak 2012a, 310.

67 See Rackham 1942, 356–357 and Radt 2008, 318.

The form found in Pliny the Elder's manuscripts *Arg(i)athicerta*⁶⁸ is widely emanated to *Karkathiokerta*⁶⁹ on the basis of *Geog.* 11.14.2 (Καρχαθιόκερτα).⁷⁰ In fact, the forms are very close, and both ancient authors refer to the same geographical region. Therefore, it follows that they both had the same city in mind.⁷¹ However, it appears that the original name of this city was connected with the Iranian name, Arkathias, who, as the king of Sophene, must have been the founder of this city.⁷² Consequently, the original name of the city must have been *Arkathiokerta.

Unlike Strabo, Pliny the Elder specifies the location of the royal city of Arkathiokerta as being located near the Tigris.⁷³ At the same time, Pliny the Elder locates the two royal cities of Sophene in Greater Armenia (for Arsamosata, see below). This tendency to see Sophene as part of Greater Armenia also echoed in *Geog.* 11.12.3. Therefore, it is not straightforward to interpret it as Pliny the Elder's mistake.⁷⁴ Given the fact that both *HN* 6.26 and *Geog.* 11.12.3 are passages of geographical character, the affiliation of Sophene with Greater Armenia should be interpreted in broad geographical terms. In *HN* 6.26 Pliny the Elder uses an extended geographical definition of Greater Armenia.⁷⁵

Arkathiokerta is widely identified as modern-day Eğil.⁷⁶ It should be stressed that there is no direct evidence (epigraphic data or lexical resemblance of the toponyms) for this identification. Nevertheless, four arguments can be

68 Radt 2008, 318.

69 Rackham 1942, 356; Dillemann 1962, 120–121; Radt 2008, 318; Syme 1995, 52.

70 Jones 1928, 32; Radt 2008, 318.

71 Syme 1995, 52.

72 It was Markwart 1930, 34, who as the first scholar suggested the emendation based on the personal name Ἀρχαθίας, whom he considered as an otherwise unattested king of Sophene. Markwart 1930, 37–38 also wondered about a possible emendation to ΑΡΓΑΤΙΓΑΡΤΑ or ΑΡΓΑΤΙΓΑΡΤΑ, which would then point to Ἀρταξίας or Ἀρτάξης as the name of the city's founder. This idea has also been supported by Chaumont 1995, 335. Recently, the issue appears to have been definitely solved by the discovery of royal coins of king Arkathias. See Nercessian 2011, 61.

73 Many scholars dwell on the precision of Pliny the Elder's wording and consequently the right translation which differentiates between a location on the Tigris and near the Tigris. For instance, Hübschmann 1904, 295: "in der Nähe des Tigris"; Dillemann 1962, 120: "sur le Tigre"; Sinclair 1994–95, 212: it "could, with allowances, be called near the Tigris"; Radt 2008, 318: "ganz nah am Tigris."

74 So Dillemann 1962, 120.

75 Marciak 2012a, 310. Likewise Kessler 2001, 722.

76 Markwart 1930, 33–38; Toumanoff 1963, 167; Dillemann 1962, 120–121; Hewsens 1982, 142–143; Hewsens 1985, 59; Garsoïan 1989, 441; Sinclair 1989, 196–199, 358. By contrast, Adontz, Garsoïan 1970, 27, places Arkathiokerta at Silvan/Martyropolis.

offered to enhance this identification. First, there can be no doubt that at some point the territory of Eḡil belonged to Sophene. Second, the site of Eḡil has an impressive location. It is situated at a great height above of Tigris' gorges, and as a result it has a dominant position overlooking the western bank of the Tigris.⁷⁷ Third, Eḡil's material remains include Assyrian, Hellenistic, and Byzantine relics; consequently, Eḡil appears to have been continuously inhabited through centuries.⁷⁸ Fourth, the ruins of Eḡil feature a number of impressive rock-cut tombs.⁷⁹ This detail has a striking parallel in the Armenian tradition preserved in the *Ēpic Histories* 4.24, which speak of the tombs of the kings of Armenia in the district of Angeḡtun.⁸⁰ The city of Angeḡ (modern Eḡil) as the center of the district (to which it gave its name) is a natural candidate for the site of the royal tombs in the district of Angeḡtun. However, this location of the necropolis of the royalty of Greater Armenia is extremely unlikely because of the distance between it and the heartland of Greater Armenia around Artaxata.⁸¹ At the same time, this tradition may be interpreted in a certain way. BP 4.24 correctly preserves a general memory of the existence of royal tombs in Eḡil, but wrongly identifies its royal owners⁸²—either by taking the Sophene royalty for a sub-branch of the Armenian Arsacid dynasty or by consciously putting a false label on this identification in order to reinforce Greater Armenia's territorial rights to this region.⁸³ At any rate, a general memory of Eḡil as a royal necropolis reinforces its identification as one of the royal cities of the Sophene.

In two more passages, Pliny the Elder may be referring to Sophene through the use of the terms *Cephenia* and *Cepheni*. In writing about Armenia in *HN* 6.28, Pliny the Elder mentions that

it is shut in on the east, but not immediately, by the Ceraunian Mountains and similarly by the Adiabene district. The intervening space is occupied by the Cepheni, and next to them the mountain district beyond is occupied by the Adiabeni, while along the valleys the peoples adjoining Armenia are the Menobardi and Moscheni.⁸⁴

77 Sinclair 1989, 162; Marciak 2012a, 311.

78 Sinclair 1989, 196–199; Marciak 2012a, 311.

79 See Sinclair 1989, 196–199.

80 Garsoïan 1989, 157.

81 Marciak 2012a, 311.

82 Likewise Garsoïan 1989, 441; Sinclair 1994–95, 196, n. 19.

83 Marciak 2012a, 311.

84 Rackham 1942, 356–357.

At face value, this passage offers a troubling description of whether there is any connection between *Cephenia* and *Sophene* in Pliny the Elder's *HN*. Pliny the Elder describes the eastern frontier of Armenia, which in his view is enclosed by the Ceraunian Mountains (*Cerauni*) and Adiabene, though not directly, as the Cephene occupies the intervening space. If the Ceraunian Mountains (*Cerauni*) are to be understood as part of the Caucasus range,⁸⁵ then the Ceraunian Mountains cannot be identified with any mountains in the vicinity of Sophene, because the Ceraunian Mountains and Sophene lay too far apart. The reference to the Menobardi and the Moscheni is of no help in making the geographical context clear, as these ethnonyms are not attested elsewhere.⁸⁶

In turn, in *HN* 6. 41 Pliny the Elder again refers to the location of Armenia:⁸⁷

The kingdom of the Persians, which we now know as Parthia, lies between the two seas, the Persian and the Caspian, on the heights of the Caucasus range. Greater Armenia, which occupies the front of the mountain sloping towards Kommagene, is adjoined, as we have said, by Cephenia, which lies on the descent on both sides of it, and this by Adiabene, where the land of the Assyrians begins ...

This time, it appears that the location of *Cephenia* fits what we otherwise know about the location of Sophene. Pliny the Elder's *Cephenia* is located next to Kommagene. What is more, it straddles the Tauros, especially because it borders Adiabene (which must here be taken as an entity extended much to the west, as far as the region of Nisibis).

How to understand the discrepancy between the *Cepheni* in *HN* 6.28 and *Cephenia* in *HN* 6.41? Scholars differ considerably when it comes to the identification of the Cephene. Some scholars identify the Cephene with the Chaldeans (from Armenia or Mesopotamia),⁸⁸ others connect Cephenia with modern-day Hasankeyf (known to Byzantine sources as Cephae),⁸⁹ while still others withdraw from any closer identification considering the Cephene as a "mythisches Volk, dessen Wohnsitz unterschiedlich lokalisiert wird."⁹⁰ It is mainly

85 Bostock, Riley 1855, 454, n. 4.

86 Brodersen 1996, 175.

87 Rackham 1942, 366–369.

88 Baumstark 1899, 2061–2062; Lehmann-Haupt 1910, 374–376.

89 Markwart 1930, 10.

90 Brodersen 1996, 175. Likewise Lattke 1921, 222.

L. Dillemann who speaks in favor of the identification of Cephēni as the inhabitants of Sophene.⁹¹

The confusion among modern scholars apparently results from by a great variety of references to the Cephēni in very different contexts in ancient literature. The fact that some features attributed to this people in ancient sources are clearly legendary also contributes to our problem of identification (e.g. see Herod. *Hist.* 7.61; *Geog.* 1.2.35: Cephēos was the grandfather of Perses, the eponym of the Persians).⁹² In our view, the geographical context of *HN* 6.28 does not suggest any connection with Sophene and its inhabitants. At the same time, however, it is definitely Sophene that is expressed by the use of the term Cephēnia in *HN* 6.41. The contrast between the appearance of akin terms *Cephēnia* and *Cephēni* *HN* 6.41 and *HN* 6.28 perhaps results from the lexical similarity of the two terms, *Sophene* and *Cephēnia*, which could easily be interchanged either in Pliny the Elder or in the hands of his copyists; in contrast, the occurrence of the ethnonym *Sophēni* (*Sophēnoi*) in ancient sources is very rare, and consequently this term cannot be easily confused.⁹³ Thus, in *HN* 6.41 the term Sophene was mistakenly replaced by the other term, Cephēnia, while in *HN* 6.28 the Cephēni remained in their original literary context as a tribe in the Armenian East.⁹⁴

1.3 Ptolemy

The last great ancient geographer who contributes to our knowledge on the geography of Sophene is Ptolemy, who refers to this country in his description of Greater Armenia in his work *Geographike hyphegesis* (commonly known as *Geography*, hereinafter *Geogr.*). To be precise, Ptolemy mentions Sophene and its neighbors in the context of his description of major rivers in Greater Armenia in *Geogr.* 5.13.13:⁹⁵

⁹¹ Dillemann 1962, 119–120.

⁹² See Lattke 1921, 222.

⁹³ Marciak 2012a, 312. Likewise Dillemann 1962, 120, who, however, reaches a different solution.

⁹⁴ Marciak 2012a, 312.

⁹⁵ The edition used here is that of Stückelberger, Graßhoff 2006. The translation uses the text of Hewsén 1992, 149 with modifications by the author. Remarkably, different sigla to Ptolemy's references to Sophene and Anzitene are quoted by other scholars (e.g. Syme 1995, 52 and Hewsén 1982): respectively, *Geogr.* 5.12.6 and *Geogr.* 5.12.8.

In the section which is below this up to that river which flows into the Euphrates in the northern country are the lands, beginning from the West, Basilisene, Obordene and Arsesea; and below these Akilisene, Astaunitis and Sophene near the same bend of the river.

This passage lists countries located between two rivers: the Euphrates and another, anonymous to Ptolemy, tributary of the Euphrates to the south. The location of Sophene is very precisely put as near the confluence of the Euphrates with its anonymous southern tributary. Given the hydrography of today's southeastern Turkey, the southern tributary of the Euphrates mentioned in *Geogr.* 5.13.13 must be the Murat River (ancient Arsanas).⁹⁶ In this light, Ptolemy's Sophene is located in the corner marked by the juncture of the Euphrates and the Murat; what is more, it is bordered by Akilisene and Astaunitis (the Bingöl plain, see below).⁹⁷ This definition is surprisingly precise, but also a little surprising if we take into account Strabo's and Pliny the Elder's definitions of the location of Sophene. Namely, Ptolemy's Sophene is a relatively small country, particularly in that the area directly south of the Murat and northwest of the Tauros belongs to the other country called Anzitene in *Geogr.* 5.13.18:

In the remaining section, located towards the South between the Euphrates and the sources of the Tigris, is Anzitene and below it Thospitis ...⁹⁸

Therefore, the territory of Ptolemy's Sophene matches the modern Dersim region and the lower Murat valley, but does not include the modern Elazığ plain, the less so any territories south of the Tauros.⁹⁹

1.4 Plutarch and *Tabula Peutingeriana*

Some information about the historical geography of Sophene can be obtained from Plutarch's account of the Third Mithridatic War, especially in the context of Plutarch's narrative of Lucullus' march to Tigranokerta.

96 Hübschmann 1904, 300; Adontz, Garsoïan 1970, 27–28, 32; Syme 1995, 52.

97 Hübschmann 1904, 300, 404; Adontz, Garsoïan 1970, 27–28, 32; Syme 1995, 52.

98 The translation uses the text of Hewsens 1992, 150 with modifications by the author.

99 Hübschmann 1904, 300, 404; Adontz, Garsoïan 1970, 27–28, 32.

In Plutarch's narrative, Lucullus led his troops through Sophene on his way to Tigranes the Great's (Tigranes II) new capital, Tigranokerta (*Luc.* 24.4–24.8). Lucullus is said to have entered Sophene upon crossing the Euphrates and to have left this country (and, at the same time, enter Armenia) upon crossing the Tigris. Thus, generally speaking, Plutarch's Sophene has well-defined western and eastern borders marked by the Euphrates and Tigris rivers. At the same time, the very fact that Plutarch mentions Sophene only on the account of the Romans *traversing* through its territory shows that this country was located in an important communication transit area.

The importance of this region as a crossroads of major communication lines (for more on this topic, see chapter 2.6.) finds perfect confirmation in ancient sources known broadly as the Roman itineraries, especially the *Tabula Peutingeriana* (the *Peutinger Table*, abbreviated as PT hereinafter).¹⁰⁰

Namely, the PT indicates six itineraries that traverse northern Mesopotamia from west to east. Looking from north to south, the routes are: first, from Melitenis (Melitene) to Belnar (Arbela); second, from “Ad Tygrem” via Triganocarten (Tigranocerta) to Isumbo; third, from Zeugma to “Ad flumen Tigrim”; fourth, from Sathena to Singara; fifth, from Edessa to Sirgora (Singara); and sixth, from Sathena to Ctesiphon.¹⁰¹

As far as the territory of Sophene and its close vicinity is concerned, many toponyms marking stations on the PT have not been identified with certainty,¹⁰² but there can be no doubt that the first route mentioned above crosses the area of Sophene, as does the second. Namely, the crossing from Melitene to Mesopotamia is marked on the PT as “Ad Aras,” which is widely identified as Tomisa, known from other sources as the major crossing of the Euphrates from Melitene into Mesopotamia (Polyb. 34.13; *Geog.* 12.2.1 and *Geog.* 14.2.29; Stephen of Byzantium *apud* Tomisa).¹⁰³

100 The *Antonine Itinerary* provides information for the Eastern Empire only as far as Edessa, and it is consequently of no use for the present study. In turn, the *Ravenna Cosmographer* is of secondary use towards the *Peutinger Table*, since it provides only lists of names (without distances or suggestions of directions). The present study follows A. Comfort's interpretation and use of Roman itineraries, as he tested the information gained from these sources in practice. See Comfort 2009, 35–38. In addition, for an overview of the latest state of research on the PT, see Talbert 2010, especially 10–72.

101 Dillemann 1962, 147. See also Sinclair 1996–1997 and Comfort 2009, 106–113.

102 For toponyms mentioned with regard to the routes crossing *regiones Transtigritanae*, see Comfort 2009, 113, 125, 169–171 (and for toponyms from ‘more southern’ routes, see Comfort 2009, 135, 138–139, 143, 150, 153–154, 156–157, 161–162, 166–167), see also a general list of toponyms in Talbert 2000, 1269–1286.

103 Dillemann 1962, 117; Talbert 2000, 1269; Howard-Johnston 2006, 277; Comfort 2009, 113.

Another important crossing on this route takes place “Ad Tygrem,” which has been identified as the vicinity of modern Amida.¹⁰⁴ “Ad Tygrem” is an important crossroads for the PT, as from there one can take the route either to Singara (and further to Ctesiphon) or to Tigranocerta (Tigranokerta).¹⁰⁵ If Tigranokerta is to be identified with Silvan or Arzan, then the second route leads through much of the upper Tigris region. At the same time, the travel can be continued from Tigranokerta beyond the upper Tigris region, especially by taking several consecutive routes to Artaxata.

A very important station for the present study is shown on the PT as “Ad flumen Tigrim,” which has been identified as a crossing point near modern Cizre, which means that it was located in Gordyene.¹⁰⁶ According to PT, from “Ad flumen Tigrim” one can continue to Ctesiphon, which must actually involve traversing through the territory of Adiabene.¹⁰⁷

Coming back to Lucullus, the question arises as to where precisely Lucullus’ troops crossed the two rivers. As a matter of introduction, we must remark that taking a route in ancient times, especially by a large group, was not only a matter of personal preference, but depended on the natural environment as well, especially on the existence of fords and mountain passes. Therefore, Lucullus must have had a limited number of possible routes to choose from.¹⁰⁸

Concerning the Euphrates crossing, it is widely held that the Romans used the Tomisa crossing, one of the major ancient crossings of the Euphrates.¹⁰⁹ Several arguments can be given in favor of this identification. First, given the fact that Lucullus’ last known stop in Plutarch’s narrative was Kilikia (*Luc.* 23), the Tomisa crossing was the closest to him.¹¹⁰ Second, the king of Cappadokia, Ariobarzanes I, received Tomisa from Lucullus for his support of the Romans during the Third Mithridatic War (*Geog.* 12.2.1), and this fact makes Tomisa the natural candidate for its use by Lucullus’ troops, who could then be assisted by Ariobarzanes I during the crossing.¹¹¹ Third, if Tigranokerta was located in the upper Tigris valley (Silvan or Arzan), or even in Tell Ermen in the Nisibis area, then the choice of the Tomisa crossing would involve following an an-

104 See Talbert 2000, 1269.

105 Comfort 2009, 110, 113.

106 See Talbert 2000, 1269.

107 Comfort 2009, 108.

108 For ancient itineraries in the region, see Dillemann 1962, 147–165; Sinclair 1995–96; Hewsen 2001, 70 (m. 59), and, preferably, Comfort 2009, 101–169.

109 Holmes 1923, 192; Weissbach 1927b, 1016; Magie 1950, 344; Dillemann 1962, 117; Sherwin-White 1984, 177; McGushin 1992, 171; Olbrycht 2009, 69.

110 Henderson 1903, 274–275; Dillemann 1962, 263; Marciak 2012a, 314–315.

111 Eckhardt 1910a, 77; Holmes 1923, 192; Dillemann 1962, 117; McGushin 1992, 171.

cient route used partly by the Achaemenid royal road, later well known to the Roman itineraries.¹¹²

Where can we locate Tomisa today? Given the continuity of local nomenclature and for topographical reasons, it is widely pointed to a site called nowadays Tomisa Kale. The latter stands high above the Euphrates and as such is indeed “ideally placed” for watching both the river crossing and the nearby pass to the Elazığ plain (see also below).¹¹³

The location of the Tigris crossing is less clear. The first problem is that different tributaries were considered by ancient writers as the Tigris itself.¹¹⁴ In the Sophene region, the Tigris starts its course near Lake Gölcük. This part of its course is usually called the Ergani River (and this tributary is nowadays considered as the actual source of the Tigris). Another important watershed of the Tigris is called the Dibene River, which begins northeast of Eğil (that is, beyond the Ergani pass of the Tauros). The existence of Assyrian reliefs in the vicinity shows that at least some ancients considered this tributary as the source of the Tigris. The confluence of the two watersheds occurs near Ziata, after which the Tigris continues south until Amida/Diyarbakır where it bends sharply eastwards. Thus, Lucullus’ crossing of the Tigris may refer to the Ergani River or the main Tigris course near Amida/Diyarbakır. Perhaps the fact that the Tigris crossing by the Romans is reported only after a several-day march (the distance between Tomisa Kale and Ergani is around 130 km), the Ergani is located too close. It is more likely that the Romans’ crossing of the Tigris refers to its main course south of Ziata. The second problem is that after the Ergani pass, Lucullus’ itinerary heavily depends on his destination, Tigranokerta, the location of which is not absolutely certain to modern scholars.¹¹⁵ Namely, after the Tauros pass at Ergani the eastern route from Tomisa separates into two directions: over the Tigris into the upper Tigris valley or southeast on to

¹¹² Eckhardt 1910a, 82; Dillemann 1962, 117; Sherwin-White 1994, 240.

¹¹³ Sinclair 1989, 41, 43. Some scholars use other modern names: İzolu/İzoğlu (older name) or Kuşsarayı (younger name). This was likely the place of the ford itself which was in turn guarded by the nearby fortress Tomisa on the east bank. See Eckhardt 1910a, 82; Magie 1950, 789 (n. 17), 1099 (n. 16); Honigmann 1954, 37; Delatte 1958, 119; Frankfort 1963, 181, Sinclair 1989, 43.

¹¹⁴ See Honigmann 1936, 1008–1023 (esp. 1012–1013); Dillemann 1962, 40–49 (esp. 41–43 for Strabo) and Syme 1995, 28–29. For example, Strabo’s Tigris in fact equals the Bitlis or the Bohtan rivers (Tigris’ eastern tributaries), which means that he did not know of the western Tigris.

¹¹⁵ For the most recent overview of various identifications, see Marciak 2016a.

the Mesopotamian plain.¹¹⁶ However, it appears that in the current state of research, it is a location in the upper Tigris valley (Silvan or Arzan), which is more likely as the site of ancient Tigranokerta.¹¹⁷ Furthermore, if we discount the possibility that Lucullus' crossing took place on the Ergani (as it took place only after a several-day march), then the route to the Nisibis area (Tell Ermen) would involve either two crossings of the Tigris or none.¹¹⁸ Given the fact that Lucullus' troops are reported to have crossed the Tigris only once, it follows that the crossing occurred at the western Tigris, perhaps near modern-day Diyarbakır.¹¹⁹ The vicinity of modern-day Diyarbakır was known to later Roman itineraries as a convenient ford ("Ad Tygrem," according to the PT). It is this strategic importance that must have been the reason for the foundation of Roman Amida, whose role was to control these vital crossroads of communication line.¹²⁰

To sum up, Plutarch's description of Lucullus' march through Sophene envisages its western border on the Euphrates and the eastern border at the western Tigris. In this light, it must be stressed that Sophene's territory also included the area east of the Tauros (approximately between modern Ergani and Diyarbakır), but did not (yet) include the upper Tigris valley (east of the Dibene river). Plutarch's description of the march of the Roman legions through Sophene also reveals the importance of Sophene as an important communication transit area.

1.5 Tacitus

Another ancient historian whose accounts shed some light on the historical geography of Sophene is Tacitus. Of special interest to us is Tacitus' description (Tac. *Ann.* 15.7–17¹²¹) of Paetus' (Roman governor of Cappadocia) campaign against the Parthians in 62/63 CE, which itself was the final stage of Roman-Parthian war, sometimes known as the Corbulo Wars in Armenia (58–63 CE).

116 Marciak 2012a, 315. For the routes, see Dillemann 1962, 147–165, 263–264 and (with preference) Sinclair 1996–97.

117 Marciak 2016a.

118 Compare Dillemann 1962, 147–165, 263–264 with Sinclair 1994–95, 237; Sinclair 1996–97, 53.

119 Mommsen 1885, 679; McGushin 1992, 171; Syme 1995, 53; F. Stark 2012, 68; Marciak 2012a, 316.

120 Millar 1993, 209; Pollard 2000, 289–290; Dignas, Winter 37; 89–90, 100–103, 242–244; Marciak 2012a, 316.

121 A very brief summary of these events is also offered by Cass. Dio 62.19–23.

It was Sophene that became the scene of the final events of the Corbulo War in Armenia. Paetus' plan in 62 CE was to take Tigranokerta (Tac. *Ann.* 15.8). In an advance towards Tigranokerta, the Romans crossed the Euphrates, but did not proceed beyond the Tauros before winter. Instead, they decided to camp at Rhandeia on the Arsianias River (Tac. *Ann.* 15.8.1–2, 15.15.1–2; Cass. Dio 62.21). Additionally, a garrison of 3000 soldiers was commanded by Paetus to guard the nearby Tauros pass, and a large contingent of cavalry was stationed on the adjoining plain (Tac. *Ann.* 15.10.3). Lastly, Paetus placed his family (wife and son) under the protection of a small garrison in a *castellum* called Arsamosata (Tac. *Ann.* 15.10.3).

The toponyms mentioned by Tacitus during the Roman-Parthian campaign in 62/63 CE point to the geographical triangle marked by the Euphrates, the Arsianias, and the Tauros as the scene of the final engagement. Several specific locations in this area are mentioned in particular: Arsamosata, the Arsianias River, Rhandeia, the Tauros pass and its adjoining plain.

To begin with, Arsamosata is also mentioned in the following ancient sources: Polyb. 8.23, Plin. *HN* 6.26, and *Geogr.* 5.12.8. Similarities between the nomenclature and the geographical context are too close to think of three different cities. Polybios 8.23 locates Arsamosata between the Euphrates and the Tigris. Ptolemy *Geogr.* 5.12.8 speaks about the Euphrates and the sources of the Tigris. In turn, Pliny the Elder *HN* 6.26 places Arsamosata near (or on) the Euphrates, probably taking the Arsianias for the Euphrates itself (very similar to the modern usage, which interchangeably calls the ancient Arsianias the modern Murat River or the lower Euphrates). Finally, Tacitus uses the most widespread ancient name Arsianias.¹²²

In addition to the fact that ancient Arsamosata was located near the lower Euphrates/Murat River, Byzantine and Arabic sources shed more light on its location. For example, the 12th-century-CE Ibn Serapion remarks there is “a mountain that is over the city, and which closes it in.”¹²³ This description points to a mountainous context of its location. Consequently, ancient Arsamosata should be sought not only alongside the course of the lower Euphrates, but also along the northern edge of the Kharput plain and the Tauros, i.e., somewhere between Kharput and Palu, where the lower Euphrates and the Tauros meet.¹²⁴ The most frequently suggested identification is the modern Haraba, which features a continuous occupation from Urartian times until the Middle

¹²² Markwart 1930, 65–67; Dillemann 1962, 45–46, 143–144, 328; Garsoïan 1989, 462.

¹²³ Adontz, Garsoïan 1970, 30.

¹²⁴ Manandian 1965, 35.

Ages. Its dominant position could well match the role of a major fortress located in a mountainous region of the lower Euphrates.¹²⁵

In turn, the location of Rhandeia on the Arsánias is unknown. This name apparently goes back to the Armenian toponym *Erand*,¹²⁶ which is mentioned only twice in all Armenian literature (*BP* 5.1, 5.4), and whose precise location remains unknown.¹²⁷

The text of Polybios features another striking parallel with Tacitus' description. Namely, Polybios describes the attack of the Seleucid king Antiochos III (see also below) against King Xerxes, who is characterized as the king of the city of Ar[sá]mosata, which lies near the "Fair Plain" (*Καλὸν Πεδίον*). The re-occurrence of Arsamosata and the nearby plain in the accounts of both Polybios and Tacitus is striking. Polybios' wording (*Καλὸν Πεδίον*) expresses a reality of agricultural wealth, for which the Kharput region has been known for centuries. Due to its fertility, the Kharput plain was until recently called "Altunova" ("the Golden Plain"). In turn, the nearby mountain pass can only be the Ergani pass, which allows for long-distance communication across the Tauros.¹²⁸

125 Tomaschek 1898, 138; Honigsmann 1935, 78; Ögün 1971, 43–46; Ögün 1972, 75–78; Mitchell 1980, 10; Howard-Johnston 1983, 269–270, n. 48; Sinclair 1989, 112–116. Notable exceptions include Adontz, Garsoïan 1970, 30 (who opts for the modern village Shamushi (also known as Shamushiya, Shamush) and Kiepert 1873, 178 (who points to the modern Kharput). Both Adontz's and Kiepert's locations do not correspond well with the mountain landscape around Arsamosata envisaged by Ibn Serapion's testimony.

126 Adontz, Garsoïan 1970, 31; Chaumont 1976, 112, n. 217.

127 Garsoïan 1989, 462. In contrast, Wheeler 2002, 114 identifies ancient Rhandeia as modern Eski Pertek (but without explanation). Weighed against this identification is the fact that no ancient remains are known from Eski Pertek (see Sinclair 1989, 100–103). Concerning the Roman camp, there has been much discussion as to whether the camp was located on the north or the south bank of the Arsánias. Those in favor of the south bank of the Arsánias include Henderson 1903, 271–286; Kiessling 1914, 227–228; Mitchell 1980, 10. The north bank is suggested by Mommsen 1885, 389; von Gutschmid 1888, 132; Magie 1950, 1416, n. 55; Chaumont 1976, 111–112, n. 217. It appears that placing a camp on the north bank of the Arsánias would make the communication between the camp and other Roman garrisons (Arsamosata, the Kharput plain, the Ergani pass) only more difficult, not to mention the communication with Kappadokia via Tomisa. Therefore, it is more likely that the Roman camp at Rhandeia was located on the south bank of the Arsánias.

128 Henderson 1903, 281–282; Magie 1950, 1416, n. 56; Frankfort 1963, 181; Howard-Johnston 1983, 246; Whittow 1996, 200.

1.6 Sophene in the Context of Byzantine-Sasanian Wars

The 298 CE peace treaty between Rome and Persia changed the political alliance of several countries along the Tigris (known to other sources as *regiones Transtigritanae*, i.e., located from the Roman perspective, beyond the Tigris; see Figures 1 and 8). According to Petros Patrikios (FGrHist IV, Fr. 14),¹²⁹ the Romans received the following territories:

Intelene with Sophene, Arzanene with [the territories] of the *Karduenoi* and Zabdikene

τὴν Ἰντηληνὴν μετὰ Σοφηνῆς καὶ Ἀρζανηνὴν μετὰ Καρδουηνῶν καὶ Ζαβδικηνῆς.¹³⁰

How can we identify the aforementioned toponyms? Intelene is not attested otherwise, but this term can be emendated to *Ingilene*,¹³¹ which produces a perfect solution, as *Ingilene* corresponds to the Armenian toponym *Angettun*.¹³² *Angettun* was the Armenian district centered on the city *Angt* (which gave its name to the district).¹³³ For geographical reasons (Armenian itineraries, see below), *Angettun* can be located between the Tauros and the Martyropolis region.¹³⁴ The major city in this region is, of course, modern-day Eḡil, which is therefore widely identified as the site of ancient *Angt*.¹³⁵ This would of course imply that *Ingilene* occupied the territory where one of Sophene's capitals, *Arkathiokerta*, was located.¹³⁶

The case of *Ingilene* occupying the territory once belonging to the kingdom of Sophene makes us aware of an important phenomenon already observed in Ptolemy's account on the Euphrates region. Namely, in both cases we come across small regions occupying territories once attributed to Sophene (as either a geographical or geopolitical entity): *Anzitene* occupying the *Kharput* plain in Ptolemy, and *Ingilene* in Petros Patrikios occupying the area between

129 Müller 1851, 180.

130 See also Amm. Marc. 25.7.9 for the 363 CE peace treaty.

131 Weissbach 1927b, 1017; Blockley 1984, 31.

132 Garsoïan 1989, 440–441.

133 Garsoïan 1989, 440–441.

134 Garsoïan 1989, 440–441.

135 Hübschmann 1904, 399; Markwart 1930, 33–34; Dillemann 1962, 120–121; Toumanoff 1963, 167; Hewsen 1982, 142–143; Adontz, Garsoïan 1970, 35; Garsoïan 1989, 441.

136 Markwart 1930, 33–34; Dillemann 1962, 120–121; Toumanoff 1963, 167; Hewsen 1982, 142–143; Garsoïan 1989, 441.

the eastern Tauros (past the Ergani pass) and the Tigris. What is more, it is important to note that it is not really certain as to how to understand the term Sophene in Petros Patrikios, FGrHist IV, Fr. 14 (see below).

The next toponym, unknown to us so far, is Arzanene. The location of Arzanene is clearly indicated by Prokopios (*Aed.* 2.25.15), who mentions two regions—Sophanene (around the city Martyropolis) and Arzanene—and remarks that they were separated by the Nymphios River, which is in turn widely (mainly on the basis of Tac. *Ann.* 15.4 and Pliny the Elder, *HN* 6.129) identified as the Batman River.¹³⁷ Thus, Arzanene was located east of the Batman River.

When it comes to the next term in Petros Patrikios (FGrHist IV, Fr. 14), the text speaks, to be precise, about the territories of the *Karduenoi*, which may indicate a larger geographical area than Gordyene alone. But for our current purposes, it is enough to mention (see below) that the core of ancient Gordyene was located between Lake Van and the Tigris, with the Bohtan or Bitlis River as its western border and probably the Khabur River as its eastern boundary.¹³⁸

Lastly, the identification of Zabdikene is problematic.¹³⁹ Generally speaking, however, there appears to be a connection between the district-name Zabdikene and the city-name Bezabde. Consequently, Zabdikene can tentatively be located around the city of Bezabde on either side of the Tigris (see below).¹⁴⁰

Coming back to the most important toponym in question, Sophene, it should be noted that it is not really certain as to how to interpret it. At least two main possibilities can be suggested. First, if the Greek preposition *μετά* functions in PP as a geographically orientated link,¹⁴¹ then Sophene in Petros Patrikios (FGrHist IV, Fr. 14) refers to the region east of the western Tigris (which became later known as Sophanene, see below). This interpretation would, however, lead to one significant conclusion of a political nature. The status of the territory immediately east of the Euphrates and west of the

137 Baumgartner 1896a; Baumgartner 1896b; Hübschmann 1904, 248–251, 305–306, 310–312; Lehmann-Haupt 1926, 400; Markwart 1930, 82; Honigsmann 1935, 5; Dillemann 1962, 48–49, 121–123, 253–254; Whitby 1983, 205–218; Blockley 1984, 31–32; Wheeler 1991, 506; Syme 1995, 56; Marciak 2012b.

138 M. Hartmann 1897, 91; Nöldeke 1898, 73; Baumgartner 1912, 1594–95; Wiesehöfer 1998, 1149; Marciak 2012b.

139 See M. Streck 1903, 250; Hübschmann 1904, 32; Dillemann 1962, 110; Lightfoot 1983, 189–204; Nogaret 1984, 259, n. 10; Blockley 1984, 35; Dodgeon, Lieu 1991, 58, 377 nn. 48–49; Hauser 2003; Dignas, Winter 2007, 31, map. 3; Mosig-Walburg 2009, 139; Marciak 2012b.

140 Blockley 1984, 35; Marciak 2012b.

141 Blockley 1984, 32.

Tauros (the modern Elazığ region) was not the subject of the peace talks, which in turn implies that it was already settled before 298 CE. This can lead to only one conclusion: it belonged to Rome (no matter in what status) before 298 CE.¹⁴² Second, it has also been suggested that the preposition *μετά* could be interpreted as an indication of the higher status of *Ingilene* towards *Sophene* and *Arzanene* towards *Karduene* with *Zabdikene*.¹⁴³ This solution is possible, although not really attested in this region on any other occasion. What is more, it may evoke the impression of reversing the political importance of the regions. This is particularly the case with Sophene, which appears to be a much more important political entity in ancient sources than Ingilene.

Prokopios is another important writer who contributes to our understanding of the historical geography of the upper Tigris region. Prokopios' references to the region are made in the context of the Byzantine-Sasanian wars at the beginning of the sixth century CE. Although Prokopios remarks that there were five (unnamed by Prokopios) Armenian satraps east of the Euphrates, he in fact gives us more details about only one of such countries which he names Sophanene (*Aed.* 3.2.2–4):¹⁴⁴

... In the part of Armenia called Sophanene there is a certain city known as Martyropolis which lies on the very bank of the Nymphios River, quite close to the enemy, because the Nymphios River at that point divides the Roman from the Persian territory. For across the river lies the territory of Arzanene, which has been subject to the Persians from early times. Even so the city had been neglected by the Romans and lay always exposed to these barbarians. In consequence of this, indeed, Kavādh, King of the Persians, invaded the Roman territory during the reign of Anastasius, directing his march by way of Martyropolis, since it lay a little more than a one-day's journey from Amida for an unencumbered traveler. And as if he were still dealing with some minor detail of his journey, an incidental task of his campaign, he captured this city out of hand, not by storming the wall or by making any kind of assault or siege, but simply by sending an announcement that he would arrive.

In writing about one military episode during the Persian invasion of Armenia and Mesopotamia by King Kavādh I in 502–503 CE,¹⁴⁵ Prokopios gives us some

142 Wheeler 2002.

143 Toumanoff 1963, 175–176; Winter 1988, 171; Winter 1989, 556.

144 Dewing 1940.

145 See Dignas, Winter 2007, 100; Greatrex, Lieu 2002, 62–73; Olbrycht 2010a, 241.

precious information about the region called Sophanene, as well as one very important hint at the geography of the region at large.

Namely, according to Prokopios, the main city of Sophanene was Martyropolis (*Aed.* 3.2.2–7), located on the Nymphios (Batman) River, which also marked the border between Sophanene and Persian Arzanene (*Pers.* 1.21.6). Martyropolis was located on the route from Persian Arzanene to Amida at a distance of only one day's journey (or, more precisely, 240 stadia according to *Pers.* 1.21.6). The military role of Martyropolis as a regional fortress was, however, minimal until Emperor Justinian I actually turned Martyropolis into a real fortress by doubling the height of its walls (*Aed.* 3.2.10–14).

What is more, other reforms aiming at strengthening the military capability of Sophanene were undertaken by Emperor Justinian I. Let us give the voice to Prokopios himself (*Aed.* 3.3.1–6):¹⁴⁶

... As one goes westerly from Martyropolis, there is a place called Pheison, which is also situated in Armenia, in the section called Sophanene, a little less than a day's journey distant from Martyropolis. Beyond this place, at about the eighth milestone, precipitous and altogether impassable mountains come together to form two passes, very close to each other, which they are wont to call cleisurae. And when travellers go from Persarmenia to Sophanene, either from the Persian territory itself or by way of the fortress of Kitharizon, it is necessary for them to get there by way of these two passes. The natives call the one of them Illyrisos and the other Saphchai. And for the purpose of checking the enemy's advance in that region, these places were, as it happened, worth making thoroughly defended and well equipped in every way. Yet they remained altogether unguarded by the men of earlier times. But the Emperor Justinian, by establishing admirable forts at Pheison and in the passes and posting in them invincible garrisons, has made this region altogether inaccessible to the barbarians. Such were the things done by the Emperor Justinian in the territory called Sophanene ...

Prokopios' passage presents Sophanene as a strategically significant district where two important lines of communications crossed: one from Persian Armenia and another from Kitharizon in Roman Greater Armenia (via Kitharizon one could also reach Erzurum further north). Furthermore, the general geographical context of *Aed.* 3.3.1–6 is relatively clear and can be verified in the topography of the region. The pass through the Tauros from Martyropolis

146 Dewing 1940.

to Kitharizon is the Birkleyin pass; the other pass, leading from Martyropolis to Persian Armenia, follows the Kulp torrent (which itself is the upper reach of the Batman River).¹⁴⁷ According to Dillemann, the name of Prokopios' *Pheison* is preserved in the modern name of the Fis plain. Several possibly ancient ruins can nowadays be found in this area, especially Dakyanus Kale suggested as Pheison,¹⁴⁸ Birkleyin as Illyrisos,¹⁴⁹ and Çeper as Saphchai.¹⁵⁰ At any rate, Prokopios' account testifies to strategic importance of Sophanene as a transit region, as well as confirms an otherwise well-known military practice to place fortifications at outlets of mountain passes and river crossings.¹⁵¹

1.7 *Notitia Dignitatum*

In speaking about the presence of Roman fortresses in the *regiones Trans-tigritanae*, another ancient source which sheds more light on this issue is the fourth-century-CE *Notitia Dignitatum*, "official handbook of the civil and military officials in the later Roman Empire",¹⁵² which, however, underwent some revisions since the time of its creation. It consequently contains many corruptions and mistakes in its current shape.¹⁵³ Nevertheless, it has convincingly been demonstrated that this document still has some value for the study of the Roman army in the East.¹⁵⁴ As far as the Eastern legions are concerned, *Notitia Dignitatum* lists military officials subdued to *dux Syriae*, *dux Osrhoenae*, and *dux Mesopotamiae*. Most offices mentioned under the *dux of Mesopotamiae* are located further south of the Tigris, but in two cases, ND's references are directly relevant to the present study. Namely, ND OR XXXVI mentions Cephae as the base of the prefect of the Second Parthian Legion (*praefectus legionis secundae Parthicae*), and Amida as the base of two units of cavalry, the *Equites scutarii Illyriciani* and the *Equites ducatores Illyriciani*.

Given the fact that, in general, ND is considered to reflect the position of Roman legions in the East mainly in the fourth century CE (most likely after

147 Dillemann 1962, 39 (fig. 111) and 235–236. See also Honigmann 1935, 19 and Sinclair 1989, 272.

148 Sinclair 1989, 272; Comfort 2009, 320.

149 Sinclair 1989, 274–277; Comfort 2009, 318–319.

150 Sinclair 1989, 273–274; Comfort 2009, 318.

151 See Howard-Johnston 1983, 270–271, n. 52; Edwell 2008, 1–30 (esp. 29–30); Wheeler 2007, 247; Marciak 2012b.

152 Kirsch 1911.

153 See Seeck 1875, 228–242; P. Brennan 1996, 147–178; P. Brennan 1998, 34–49.

154 Comfort 2009, 41–42.

359 CE, when the Romans lost the fortress Bezabde, which is not mentioned in ND),¹⁵⁵ the question arises as to how we can understand the presence of Roman troops in *regiones Transtigritanae* before their formal annexation. It appears that we have two options. First, at some point Amida and Cephæ may have belonged directly to the Roman province of Mesopotamia and were no longer part of the *regiones Transtigritanae*. Second, the presence of Roman military units in two important cities in *regiones Transtigritanae* shows that *Imperium Romanum* could keep their legions there even before the formal annexation of *regiones Transtigritanae*. This option appears to be confirmed by Prokopios' testimony. What is more, it is also attested in the archaeological data. For instance, the fortress in Tilli was located on the eastern bank of the Tigris, i.e., definitely in *regiones Transtigritanae*, but there can be no doubt that it had a Roman garrison.

1.8 Byzantine Administrative Reforms of Armenian Lands

Prokopios' narratives about the political status of semi-autonomous satrapies in the upper Tigris region provides a backdrop for later administrative reforms undertaken by Byzantine emperors, especially by Emperor Justinian I in 527 CE and 536 CE.

In 527 CE the office of *magister militum* (the highest military office in Byzantium in the sixth century CE) was appointed over four provinces (*Cod. Iust.* 1.29.5):¹⁵⁶

Since the Roman rule has been conferred on us by a propitious divinity, we have concluded after careful consideration and so licitous care that we should by this law establish a separate master of forces in Armenia, Pontus Polemoniachus and other regions, and we have chosen Your Magnitude, well recommended to us by previous conduct, confident that you will be suitable for such position, and we have committed certain provinces, that is Greater Armenia, which is called the interior, and other regions—namely Anzetena, Ingilena, Asthianena, Sophena, Sophanena, in which Martyropolis is located, and Balabitena—and the first and second Armenia and Pontus Polemoniachus, together with their dukes, to your care ...

¹⁵⁵ Comfort 2009, 41–42.

¹⁵⁶ Krüger 1959, 82. The translation is that of F.H. Blume, available at <http://www.uwyo.edu/lawlib/blume-justinian>.

In turn, in 536 CE the territories mentioned above were reorganized once more by Emperor Justinian I (*Leges Novellae*—*Leg. Nov.* 31.1.3), the autonomy of the satrapies was entirely abolished, and they were incorporated into the Byzantine Empire as one of four provinces (see Figure 78), more precisely as *Armenia Quarta* (next to *Armenia Prima*, *Armenia Secunda*, and *Armenia Tertia*):¹⁵⁷

We also establish the Fourth Armenia, a district not formerly reduced to a provincial form, but was a collection of nations of various foreign names, known as Tzophanene, Anzetene or Tzophene and Asthianene, also called Balabitene, and ruled by satraps—the name of a magistrate not Roman and not known to our ancestors, but was introduced from a foreign country ...

Both texts are of paramount importance for the historical geography of Sophene, as they give us a well-defined administrative list of districts, including the region named first as the *gentes/ethne* and later as *Armenia Quarta*. Most importantly, for the first time in ancient classical sources we hear of two similar names at once (for linguistic variety, see chapter 2.4.1) Sophene (*Sophena* in Latin and Τζωφηνή in Greek) and Sophanene (*Sophanena* in Latin and Τζωφανηνή in Greek); one of these is clearly identified by the reference to its main city, Martyropolis.

Namely, *Cod. Iust.* 1.29.5 enumerates Anzitene (*Anzatena* in Latin, Ἀνζιτηνή or Ἀνζιτηνή in Greek), Ingilene (*Ingilena* in Latin and Ἰγγιληνή in Greek), Asthianene (*Asthianena* in Latin and Ἀσθιανηνή in Greek), Sophene (*Sophena* in Latin and Τζωφηνή in Greek), Sophanene (*Sophanena* in Latin and Τζωφανηνή in Greek) with its main city Martyropolis, and Balabitene (*Balabitena* in Latin and Βαλαβιτηνή in Greek). Anzitene is mentioned by Ptolemy *Geogr.* 5.12.8, which gave a relatively precise definition of its location (see also below Armenian sources: BP 4.24, 5.17): between the Euphrates and the sources of the Tigris, and close to Lake Thospitis, which perfectly matches today's Elazığ plain.¹⁵⁸ In turn, Ingilene corresponds to the Armenian *Angeltun*, the district centered around the city *Angl* (possibly today's Eğil), which is located on the right bank of the Ergani River north of its confluence with the Dibene River

157 The translation is that of F.H. Blume, available at <http://www.uwyo.edu/lawlib/blume-justinian>.

158 Hübschmann 1904, 300–302; Dillemann 1962, 46, 103, 119; Adontz, Garsoïan 1970, 28; Garsoïan 1989, 442–443.

(both streams form the western Tigris after their junction).¹⁵⁹ Thus, Ingilene bordered Anzitene to its west (possibly by the Tauros) and Sophanene to its east (it is not entirely clear at which point the border could tentatively be drawn, possibly the western Tigris and its source streams, the Ergani or Dibene rivers can be suggested).¹⁶⁰ Asthianene and Balabitene are first mentioned in Byzantine sources—Prokopios, *Aed.* 3.3.7 (Asthianene), *Aed.* 3.1.26 (Balabitene), and *Cod. Iust.* 1.29.5, but both toponyms have fitting Armenian equivalents: *Hašteank'* and *Balahovit*. They were located, respectively, in the Bingöl plain¹⁶¹ and in the plain around the city of Palu.¹⁶²

Finally, *Cod. Iust.* 1.29.5 mentions two linguistically close toponyms, Sophene and Sophanene. The latter is here clearly defined by the reference to its main city, Martyropolis. Therefore, it is evident that Sophanene in *Cod. Iust.* 1.29.5 can match Prokopios' Sophanene, which had a well-defined eastern border on the Nymphios/Batman River. Thus, Sophanene can be located between Ingilene and Arzanene, i.e., between (tentatively) the western Tigris River and (certainly) the Batman River.¹⁶³ Where, then, can we locate *Sophene*? First, we must remark that the list of the *gentes* in *Cod. Iust.* 1.29.5 is not ordered geographically, or at least its order is greatly disturbed, e.g. looking from west to east (along the course of the Arsanias), Asthianene and Balabitene were neighbors. Thus, it appears that the only way towards an attempt at placing Sophene on the map of the *gentes* mentioned in *Cod. Iust.* 1.29.5 is through the process of elimination: placing well-identified toponyms on the map leaves us with a void that may be occupied by Sophene. In this regard, Sophene in *Cod. Iust.* 1.29.5 surprisingly matches Ptolemy's Sophene. It is a country east of the Euphrates, south of the Antitauros (Munzur Mountains that, approximately, marked the border of the provinces of *Armenia Prima* and *Armenia Secunda*)¹⁶⁴ and north of the Kharput plain.

Lastly, one may note that the list of countries comprising the province *Armenia Quarta* in *Leg. Nov.* 31.1.3 features one difference with *Cod. Iust.* 1.29.5: the lack of Ingilene in the list. Unless this lack is the result of a mistake on the part of copyists, this situation can easily be explained as a result of

159 Dillemann 1962, 46, 103, 119; Adontz, Garsoïan 1970, 35; Garsoïan 1989, 440–441.

160 See Hübschmann 1904, 249; Sinclair 1989, 368.

161 Hübschmann 1904, 291–293; Hewsen 1992, 155, n. 31; Garsoïan 1989, 467–468; Sinclair 1989, 140.

162 Hübschmann 1904, 294; Adontz, Garsoïan 1970, 27; Hewsen 1992, 155–156, n. 34; Sinclair 1989, 140.

163 Marciak 2012a, 325.

164 Preiser-Kapeller 2001, 26–28.

administrative or geopolitical changes in which one district could be joined with or subdued by another.¹⁶⁵ If so, Ingilene must have been subsumed under Anzitene¹⁶⁶ or Sophanene.¹⁶⁷

1.9 *Descriptio Orbis Romani* by George of Cyprus

Another important source that contributes to our knowledge on the historical geography of the Sophene region is *Descriptio Orbis Romani* by George of Cyprus, dated to ca. 604 CE. *Descriptio Orbis Romani* reflects important geopolitical changes in the region resulting from Roman military campaigns in the Caucasus region in 588–589/590 CE and a pro-Roman coup d'état in Persia.¹⁶⁸

In light of *Descriptio Orbis Romani* (lines 909–965),¹⁶⁹ new Roman territorial gains in Armenia and Mesopotamia were organized within two new provinces: one named *Mesopotamia* or *Armenia Quarta* (Ἐπαρχία Μεσσοποταμίας ἄνω ἦτοι Δ' Ἀρμενίας) and another with a similar name the *Other Armenia Quarta* (Ἐπαρχία Δ' Ἀρμενίας ἄλλης).¹⁷⁰

165 This phenomenon appears quite often in ancient sources which enumerate countries located east of the Euphrates and in the upper Tigris valley in the context of Byzantine-Sasanian peace treaties. The best-known example of this kind is the relation between the 298 CE and the 363 CE peace treaties between Rome and Persia. Both FGrHist IV, Fr. 14 and Amm. Marc. 25.7.9 list five countries, but their names do not match up (which most likely results from the fact that they do not refer to exactly the same territories). Likewise, Prokopios, *Aed.* 3.2.6–10 mentions five satraps, *Cod. Iust.* 1.29.5 speaks of five districts, but *Leg. Nov.* 31.1.3 has six districts. The closest parallel to the lack of Ingilene in *Cod. Iust.* 1.29.5 can be found in Amm. Marc. 25.7.9, where *Rehimena* and *Moxoena* are mentioned, though they do not appear in the 'parallel' list in Petros Patrikios (who, however, speaks of the territories inhabited by the Gordyaeans [Korduēni]). For the problem of the relation between countries mentioned in FGrHist IV, Fr. 14 and Amm. Marc. 25.7.9, see Blockley 1984, 28–49; Mosig-Walburg 2009, 135–136; Preiser-Kapeller 2001, 42; Marciak 2012b. See also Hewsen 1978–79, 91–95 about the nature of geopolitical divisions between various parts of Armenia.

166 Toumanoff 1963, 172; Sinclair 1989, 140; Preiser-Kapeller 2001, 42.

167 Adontz, Garsoïan 1970, 34.

168 See Garsoïan 1997, 108; Greatrex, Lieu 2002, 170–175; Olbrycht 2010, 249–250.

169 The edition of Honigsmann 1939 is used here.

170 The Romans also made new territorial gains in the region of Iberia and Eastern Armenia. The main source for this aspect of the 591 CE peace treaty is Sebeos, who, however, does not provide any information on the area south of Lake Van (Armenia and Mesopotamia). See Preiser-Kapeller 2001, 67–68.

The province of *Mesopotamia* or *Armenia Quarta* included the territories centered on the cities of Amida, Martyropolis, Dara, and the district (κλίμα) of Arzanene.¹⁷¹ Thus, the territory known to other sources (Prokopios, *Leg. Nov.* 31.1.3; *Cod. Iust.* 1.29.5) as Sophanene functions in *Descriptio Orbis Romani* under the name of its main city, Martyropolis. Consequently, according to George of Cyprus, Sophanene and Arzanene were located in the province of Mesopotamia (also known as *Armenia Quarta*), together with the territory south of Ṭūr ‘Abdīn in the Mesopotamian plain.¹⁷² What is more, Amida also apparently stands for another district. It is possible that it included all the territory between Anzitene (recalled in the *Other Armenia Quarta*) and Sophanene, as Ingilene is not mentioned in the *Other Armenia Quarta* or *Mesopotamia (Armenia Quarta)*.

What is interesting, *Descriptio Orbis Romani* lists many fortresses (κάστρα) in these districts. More precisely, 24 fortresses are mentioned for all the districts around Amida, Martyropolis, and Dara: Πισκηφᾶς, Τουράνδιος, Μάρδης, Λόρνης, Πίφθον, Ἰσφριος, Τζαύρας, Αὐδάσσω, Ἀβάρμης, Τζινοβίας, Ἰνζιετών, Βαναβήλων, Χοῦδδων, (Αἴσου)δοῦος, Μασφρόνας, Βασιλικόν, Σπηλόγκαι, Ὀδήλων, Βηϊουβαῖθας, Μανασσάρων, Φιρθαχαβράης, Σιτέων Χίφας, Κάλωνος, Βιβασάρων, Τζαύρας, Βίρθας, Ἀτταχᾶς and five only for the district (κλίμα) of Arzanene: Ἀφουμῶν, Ἀριβάρχων, Φλωριανῶν, Δαφνοῦδιν, Βαλοῦος, and Σαμοχάρτων.¹⁷³ As for the fortresses in the districts around Amida, Martyropolis, and Dara, most of them are unfortunately unidentifiable.¹⁷⁴ Only in several cases we may speak of reasonably probable identifications: *Riskephas* is frequently identified with modern Hasankeyf (Roman Cephæe),¹⁷⁵ *Mardes* matches almost perfectly modern Mardin, *Tzauras* is likely present Savur, *Inzieton* may be today's Ziata,¹⁷⁶ *Banabelon* matches well modern Benabil, *Basilikon* has been attributed to Eḡil (as once the *royal* fortress), and *Attachas* likely corresponds with modern Antağ (previously Hattāḥ) near Lice.¹⁷⁷ Concerning the fortresses in Arzanene, *Aphoumon* has been identified with modern Fum¹⁷⁸ or Zercel Kale,¹⁷⁹ modern Eskieruh has

171 Hübschmann 1904, 247; Garsoïan 1997, 104.

172 Likewise Hübschmann 1904, 247; Hewsen 1984, 360–361; Sinclair 1994–95, 223.

173 The edition of Honigmann 1939, 64–65 is followed here. But see also Gelzer 1890, 46–49.

174 For a possibly exhaustive list of all identifications, see Honigmann 1939, 64–65; Talbert 2000, 1269–1291 and Comfort 2009, 226 in particular.

175 This identification is called into question by Honigmann 1939, 64.

176 This identification is also questioned by Honigmann 1939, 64.

177 Honigmann 1939, 64; Comfort 2009, 226.

178 Honigmann 1935, 33; Honigmann 1939, 64.

179 Sinclair 1996–1997, 97.

been suggested for *Aribachon*,¹⁸⁰ and *Florianon* has been placed at Zercel Kale, but all these identifications are uncertain.¹⁸¹ *Balouos* has often been identified with Palu, which is likely; *Samocharton* is in turn known from Prokopios as a fortress guarding the Birkleyin pass; and the nearby ruins of a fortress can indeed match *Samocharton*.¹⁸² Lastly, the identification of *Daphnoudin* remains an enigma.¹⁸³

When it comes to the province of the *Other Armenia Quarta* (Ἑπαρχία Δ' Ἀρμενίας ἄλλης), George of Cyprus lists the following districts (*Descriptio Orbis Romani* 948–965): the territories around the cities *Δαδῖμων* (which functioned as the provincial capital) and *Κιθαρίζων* (both districts drawn from Greater Armenia, not of concern to us here), and next the following districts: *κλίμα Σοφῆνης*, *κλίμα Ἀνζητινῆς*, *κλίμα Διγησινῆς*, *κλίμα Γαρινῆς*, *κλίμα Βιλαβητινῆς*, *κλίμα Ὀρζιανινῆς*, *κλίμα Παλινῆς*, *κλίμα Ἀστιανικῆς*, and *κλίμα Μουζουρῶν*.¹⁸⁴ No fortresses are recalled for these districts.

The toponyms Sophene, Anzitene, and Balabitenene are already well known to us. Several other toponyms in this list appear for the first time in ancient Classical sources, but they all can be identified through good parallels in the Armenian onomasticon (see Figures 9–10).¹⁸⁵ *Digesine* corresponds to the name of the Armenian district, *Dēgik'* (which likely lay at the very west end of the modern-day Dersim plain).¹⁸⁶ In turn, *Garine* appears to be the Greek equivalent of the Armenian *Gorek'* (or *Gawrek'*, a small district southwest of the confluence of the Arsanias with the Euphrates).¹⁸⁷ Next, *Palime* goes back to the Armenian *Patnatun* (a district in the Karakoçan plain).¹⁸⁸ Furthermore, *Ordzianine* is close to the Armenian *Khorjean* (in the valley of the Gayl River between Asthianene and Karin).¹⁸⁹ Lastly, *Muzuron* must be the Armenian district *Mzur* located along the Munzur River and the Munzur Mountains.¹⁹⁰

If Anzitene and Balabitenene were kept within their traditional borders, which is likely, as they are well-marked by natural features (the Kharput plain and the

180 Talbert 2000, 1270. But see also Markwart 1930, 424; Honigmann 1935, 31, and Honigmann 1939, 65.

181 Comfort 2009, 226.

182 Comfort 2009, 226.

183 Comfort 2009, 226.

184 Gelzer 1890, 48–49. But see also Honigmann 1939, 65, verses 945–965.

185 See Hewsén 2001, maps nos. 42 and 55 on pp. 51 and 55.

186 Hübschmann 1904, 291; Sinclair 1989, 139; Hewsén 1992, 156, n. 39.

187 Hübschmann 1904, 291; Hewsén 1992, 156, n. 41.

188 Sinclair 1989, 140. See also Hübschmann 1904, 293–294; Hewsén 1992, 155, n. 32.

189 Sinclair 1989, 140. See also Hübschmann 1904, 291; Hewsén 1992, 155 n. 28.

190 Hübschmann 1904, 285; Garsoïan 1989, 482; Hewsén 1992, 154.

city Palu with its plain respectively), then Sophene, again through the process of elimination of well-defined territories, appears to be located south of the Munzur Mountains, south and west of the Munzur River, east of the Euphrates (but without a very small district *Dēgik'*), and north of the Kharput plain. In other words, the district of Sophene within the province the *Other Armenia Quarta* lay in the valleys of the Arsianias River and its northern tributaries.¹⁹¹

1.10 Sophene in Armenian Sources

Sophene is also mentioned in several ancient Armenian sources (the *Epic Histories*, Moses Khorenats'i, Agat'angelos, and the so-called *Geography of Ananias of Širak*) as *Cop'k'*.¹⁹² As for the historical geography of *Cop'k'*, the most important source in this group is the *Epic Histories* (*Patmut'iwn Hayoc'* formerly attributed to a certain P'awstos Buzandac'i (or Buzand), hence the abbreviation BP hereinafter).¹⁹³ The *Epic Histories* use a number of precise terms to refer to this country (some of which may reflect the difference between Greek Sophene and Sophanene), and also contains topographical and geographical data which may be helpful in sketching the tentative contours of borders in the territories of the Transtigritani.

To begin with, although the most common form used by the *Epic Histories* is *Cop'k'*, several other names appear in the narrative: *Cop'k' Mec* ("Great *Cop'k'*"), *Cop'k' Šahuni*, *Cop'k' Šahēi*, and *miws Cop'k'* (the *Other Cop'k'*). However, BP never uses more than two names in one context, especially in its lists of Armenian districts or Armenian princes. This suggests that BP in fact knows only two distinctive countries named *Cop'k'*, which can additionally be characterized with the addition of distinguishing epithets.¹⁹⁴

For instance, in enumerating "the greatest *nakharars*" of Armenia sent by King Tiran (ca. 338–350 CE¹⁹⁵) to establish Yusik I (grandson of St. Gregory Illuminator¹⁹⁶) as the patriarch of Armenia, BP 3.12¹⁹⁷ mentions, among other

191 Hewsen 1992, 153.

192 For a detailed list of references to Sophene (*Cop'k'*) in Armenian sources, see Marciak 2012a, 329–336.

193 Garsoïan 1989, 1–22; Andrews 2012; Hannick 2012.

194 Hübschmann 1904, 295–297; Toumanoff 1963, 167, n. 64; Adontz, Garsoïan 1970, 32; Hewsen 2001, 37.

195 Garsoïan 1997, 94; Preiser-Kapeller 2001, 38.

196 Garsoïan 1989, 431–432.

197 Garsoïan 1989, 82.

nakharars, “Zareh ... the nahapet of Cop’k’ and Varaz prince of the realm of Cop’k’ Šahuni.” Likewise, BP 4.24 enumerates several Armenian countries that were affected by the Persian attack during the reign of the Armenian king Aršak II (350–ca. 364/367 CE¹⁹⁸): “Ałjnik’, Cop’k’ Mec, Angełtun, the district of Anjit, and Cop’k’ Šahuni, the district of Mzur, Daranałē, and Ekełeac’.”¹⁹⁹ It is evident that in these two passages, Cop’k’ Šahuni is juxtaposed first with Cop’k’ (3.12) and then Cop’k’ Mec (4.24), which clearly shows that Cop’k’ and Cop’k’ Mec are used as synonyms in this context (likewise in BP 5.27–28, where the location of St. Epip’an’s missionary activity is interchangeably called Cop’k’ and Cop’k’ Mec²⁰⁰).

Furthermore, BP 3.9²⁰¹ provides us with a list of Armenian princes who remained loyal to the Armenian king Khusro III, 330–338 CE,²⁰² by fighting against the rebellion of the prince of Ałjnik’, Bakur (dated to ca. 335 CE).²⁰³ The list includes, among others princes, “Mar, prince of Cop’k’ Mec ... [and] Nerseh, prince of Cop’k’ Šahēi.” Similarly, BP 4.4²⁰⁴ mentions “the great *prince* Daniel of Cop’k’ ... and Noy, *prince* of the other Cop’k’” among Armenian princes who took part in the consecration of Nerses as the patriarch of Armenia (ca. 353–373 CE).²⁰⁵ In these two cases, Cop’k’ Mec is juxtaposed with Cop’k’ Šahēi (in BP 3.9), and only Cop’k’ is listed together with the Other Cop’k’ (in BP 4.4). Provided that Cop’k’ and Cop’k’ Mec function as synonyms in BP and that BP only knows two distinctive countries named *Cop’k’*, then it follows that Cop’k’ Šahēi is a synonym to Cop’k’ Šahuni, and this country (Cop’k’ Šahēi/Cop’k’ Šahuni) can also be called “the other Cop’k’” in a descriptive way.²⁰⁶

To sum up, BP knows two distinctive countries named Cop’k’, one referred to as just Cop’k’ or Cop’k’ Mec and another named Cop’k’ Šahēi or Cop’k’ Šahuni, or, in a descriptive way, *miws* Cop’k’ (the other Cop’k’).

What does the names Cop’k’ Šahēi/Šahuni mean, and why was one of two distinctive countries named Cop’k’ additionally characterized with the epithet “mec” (“great”)? It has been suggested that the name Cop’k’ Šahēi/Šahuni may go back the Hittite patronymic *šaḫ-uḫi*, born of a Hittite prince or a local ruling

198 Garsoñan 1997, 94.

199 Garsoñan 1989, 157.

200 Garsoñan 1989, 206–207.

201 Garsoñan 1989, 76–77.

202 Garsoñan 1997, 94.

203 Garsoñan 1989, 363–364; Preiser-Kapeller 2001, 41, n. 117; Lightfoot 2005, 496.

204 Garsoñan 1989, 111.

205 Garsoñan 1989, 395–396; Preiser-Kapeller 2001, 38.

206 Garsoñan 1989, 457.

dynasty in this particular area in the eighth century BCE.²⁰⁷ If so, this may suggest that the royal house of Sophene was of non-Orontid (and chronologically speaking, pre-Orontid) origin.²⁰⁸ At the same time, it has also been postulated that the term in question included the Persian word *šāh* (meaning a king), and accordingly should be translated as “Cop’k’ des Königs” (“royal Cop’k’”).²⁰⁹ In turn, it has been noted that the name Cop’k’ Mec (“Great (Greater) Sophene”) implies its counterpart being “Little/Lesser Sophene” (like Lesser and Greater Armenia). Indeed, the term μικρὴ Τζοφενή (Little/Lesser Sophene) is attested, but only in the *Life of St. Gregory* 171 [102]. Despite this, scholars frequently employ it as a common name for Sophene Šahuni,²¹⁰ perhaps due to convenience (because the meaning “royal Sophene” is not certain, and the term Sophene alone is not unambiguous). It has been advanced that the epithet “Mec” was coined to express a contrast between Greater Sophene and Lesser Sophene in the sense of their territorial extension.²¹¹

Where do the *Epic Histories* locate Cop’k’ Mec and Cop’k’ Šahēi/Šahuni, as well as other *regiones Transtigritanae*? Most references to Sophene in BP do not contain any useful geographical clues. However, there is one passage in BP that helps us approximately sketch the borders of the *regiones Transtigritanae*: BP 4.24 reports the Persian invasion of Armenia by the King Shapur II and lists territories through which the invading army went. This list of the invaded territories has rightly been called “a practical and plausible itinerary,” as it depicts “a drive to the western border of Armenia in a gradually curving line”:²¹² the Persians first attacked Aljnik’ (Greek Arzanene), next moved to Cop’k’ Mec, then continued alongside the Tigris until they reached Angełtun (Ingilene) and Anjit (Anzitene), where they turned northwards (*grosso modo* along the Euphrates) through Cop’k’ Šahuni and the district of Mzur, to finally reach Ekefeac’ (Akilisene).²¹³ This order of countries perfectly matches our knowledge on the historical geography of the region gained from Classical

207 Suggested by Toumanoff 1963, 167, and followed by Hewsens 2002b, 127.

208 Toumanoff 1963, 167; Hewsens 2002b, 127 in contrast to many scholars who believe the Sophene royalty to have been related to the Orontid royal family (like the royal dynasty in Kommagene and the Artaxiad dynasty in Armenia). See Perikhanian 1971, 169–174; Toumanoff 1963, 277–305; Hewsens 1985, 55–56; Sartre 2005, 23; most recently and in full detail Facella 2006, 95–198.

209 Markwart 1901, 172; Hübschmann 1904, 299 (but with a question mark).

210 Toumanoff 1963, 166–167; Hewsens 1978–79, 89; Hewsens 1984, 358; Lenski 2002, 162.

211 Adontz, Garsoïan 1970, 32.

212 Sinclair 1994–95, 196. Likewise, Hübschmann 1904, 297; Adontz, Garsoïan 1970, 35; Garsoïan 1989, 293, n. 3.

213 Marciak 2012a, 332.

sources. From east to west along the Tigris one can enumerate the following countries: Arzanene, Sophanene, Ingilene, Anzitene, and further north Sophene.

What is more, several details of topographical nature can be gleaned from the *Epic Histories*. BP 3.12 and 5.7 mention the fortress Bnabel in the district of Great Cop'k'. Bnabel is actually called a *berd*, i.e., a fortress in the sense of "a man-made stronghold" as opposed to a naturally impregnable or inaccessible site.²¹⁴ According to BP, Bnabel had the status of a royal possession. It housed a royal treasure (5.27–28) and was the seat of the palatine church (3.14).

Two other toponyms from ancient sources have been brought into connection with Armenian *Bnabel*: Βαβίλα of Ptolemy (*Geogr.* 5.12.7) and Βαναβήλων of George of Cyprus (*Descriptio Orbis Romani* 924).²¹⁵ Yet there does not have to a connection between all three toponyms, especially as there is a more consonantal similarity between the Armenian *Bnabel* and George's *Banabelon* than between the Armenian *Bnabel* and Ptolemy's *Babila*.²¹⁶ It has been suggested that the Armenian toponym can be identified with a small modern village Benabil near Mardin. Its vicinity (a hill approximately 1 km southeast of the modern-day village Bnabel) features the ruins of a castle (called "Numan Bey Kalesi").²¹⁷ If this physical identification is correct, Ptolemy's *Babila* must be dismissed as a parallel source reference,²¹⁸ as it lay north of the Tigris.²¹⁹ At the same time, it should be noted that BP locates Benabel in Cop'k' Mec, and the modern-day Benabil is only approximately 33 km north of Dara and over 150 km (depending on the route) away from Martyropolis. Any fortress so close to Dara must have belonged to the province of Mesopotamia (and to the district of Dara in the time of George of Cyprus) rather than to Sophanene (and the district of Martyropolis in the time of George of Cyprus).

Another interesting location in Cop'k' Mec is mentioned in BP 5.27–28. It is a place called Mambrē on the river named Mamušel located in the desert area where St. Epip'an's eremite activity took place. The identification of Mambrē with the Roman and Byzantine fortress Mambri in Kommagene (*Proc. Aed.* 2.8.7)²²⁰ must be rejected for obvious geographical reasons. What is more, it

214 Garsoïan 1989, 517.

215 Honigmann 1935, 35, n. 5; Honigmann 1939, 65.

216 Marciak 2012a, 332.

217 Honigmann 1935, 35, n. 5; Sinclair 1989, 340–341.

218 Garsoïan 1989, 454–455 is in favor of identifying the Armenian toponym with Ptolemy's *Babila* (but without giving any explanation).

219 Hewsen 1982, 133–134, 149.

220 Hübschmann 1904, 448.

may be impossible to pin down the location of this place, as this name appears to be an allusion to the Biblical Mamrē (Gen 13.18: מַמְרֵ in Hebrew), but Mambrē in the Armenian Bible.²²¹ Instead, what seems to be possible is to suggest a general location of St. Epip'an's eremite activity. This can be achieved through the identification of the Armenian *Mamušet* River. This name appears to correspond to the Arabic *Mūsūlyāt* River, which is mentioned by the 10th-century writer Muqaddasu as a river located between the Dhi'b = Dibni = Dibenē River and the Šarbat = Garzan River.²²² Therefore, the Armenian Mamušet River can be identified as the modern-day Batman River: indeed, the environment of its upper reaches provides a bare and rocky landscape thus matching the BP's description of the desert.²²³ Sinclair suggested several possible locations for St. Epip'an's Mambrē: Boşat, Meherani or Hasun. They all feature an abundance of caves suitable for eremite life style.²²⁴ Thus, the general location is convincing, but the identification of a specific site must remain only a matter of speculation.²²⁵

Other ancient Armenian sources do not contribute to our knowledge of the historical geography of the Sophene region in any significant way. The only notable aspect is that both Moses Khorenats'i's *History of the Armenians* and the so-called *Geography of Ananias of Širak* (*Ašxarhac'oyc'* in Armenian—hence the abbreviation ASX²²⁶) sometimes use the term Cop'k' in an anachronistic way as a *pars pro toto* name for the province of *Armenia Quarta*.

For instance, MX 2.8 describes the organization of the Armenian kingdom under King Vałaršak (who, according to MX, was the first ever Arsacid king of Armenia and younger brother of the eponymous king of Parthia, Aršak²²⁷). In doing so, MX mentions Cop'k' as a "great principality in what is called Fourth Armenia."²²⁸ Likewise, in introducing the borders of the province of Armenia Quarta, ASX 5.22.2 interchangeably calls it the region of Cop'k'.²²⁹ It has been rightly noticed that this anachronistic terminology results from the fact that the borders of the province of Armenia Quarta matched closely those once

221 Garsoïan 1989, 477; Marciak 2012a, 333.

222 Hübschmann 1904, 310, n. 3; Markwart 1940, 123; Sinclair 1994–95, 194–195, n. 15. See also Garsoïan 1989, 477.

223 Sinclair 1994–95, 194–195, n. 15.

224 Sinclair 1994–95, 194–195, n. 15; Sinclair 1989, 281–282, 292.

225 Marciak 2012a, 333.

226 Hewsen 1978–79, 77.

227 Russell 1987, 116.

228 Thomson 2006a, 139.

229 Hewsen 1992, 59.

established by the kings of Sophene.²³⁰ However, there may much more to this phenomenon than just a simple coincidence of borders. The fact that all these territories are occasionally called just Sophene (Cop'k') a number of centuries after the end of this kingdom may suggest that, despite the cultural and ethnic differences between the regions from the Euphrates to the Batman River, there was still some common base connecting them all.²³¹

1.11 Summary and Conclusions

The oldest ethnographical source informing us about the historical geography of Sophene is Strabo's *Geographika* (64 or 63 BCE to ca. 24 CE). The core of Strabo's Sophene was located east of the Euphrates and between the Antitauros (Munzur) and Tauros mountains. This area matches the modern Dersim region (occupying most of the modern Tunceli province), the lower Murat valley (on both sides of the river), and the Elazığ plain. This location also coincides with the center of the pre-Hellenistic *Şuppani*. This geographical area was of great political importance: the Tomisa crossing located on the Euphrates River in Sophene and the Ergani pass across the Tauros marked a vital section of one of the most important lines of communication between the West and the East in ancient times.

The fact that we hear of Sophene's two royal capitals in ancient sources may be connected with the possession of several royal residences by the Sophene dynasty in general.²³² But in particular, it may also echo two stages of Sophene's territorial development: Arsamosata (likely the modern Haraba) as the first royal capital (mentioned already by Polybios) was located in the heartland of Sophene (west of the Tauros), while Arkathiokerta (if identified with modern Eğil) lay east of the Tauros. Perhaps Arkathiokerta was chosen as another royal residence due to its more central position for a kingdom rapidly expanding eastwards.²³³

230 Wheeler 2002, 89. In turn, according to Sinclair 1989, 140, "the Byzantine province of Armenia IV corresponded to the old kingdom of Sophene with the addition of Balahovit and Asthianene."

231 Marciak 2012a, 338.

232 Like in the case of Armenian dynasts in Greater Armenia. See Traina 2010b, 45–49. Likewise Chaumont 1982, 89, who objected to the idea of Arkathiokerta as a replacement for the capital at Arsamosata.

233 See Chaumont 1982, 89; Sinclair 1994–95, 186. Perhaps a good parallel is the foundation of Tigranokerta by Tigranes II, who aimed at having his new capital better located in the center of a recently expanded kingdom.

Sophene as a political entity expanded its territory, especially eastwards in two directions: towards Greater Armenia and over the Tauros into the Diyarbakır region and the upper Tigris valley.²³⁴ However, Sophene's north-eastern extension towards Greater Armenia reached its climax only during the reign of King Zariadres, when Sophene probably stretched as far as the mountains to the east of Khorzene and Asthianene. After this successful and brief period, however, Sophene's long-term possessions in this area were likely limited only to Balabitene and Asthianene.²³⁵

Sophene's expansion eastwards over the Tauros had more lasting consequences. According to Plutarch (concerning 69 BCE) and Pliny the Elder (23–79 CE; but traces of such an extension of Sophene has also be argued in the case Strabo), Sophene included the Diyarbakır region (between the Tauros at Ergani and the western Tigris River). Sophene's expansion in the east finally (not before 69 BCE) included a considerable part of the upper Tigris valley, between the western Tigris and the Batman River. Its presence in this region also extended to the beginning of the limestone hills, Tūr 'Abdīn, and the Mazi Mountains south of the Tigris.²³⁶ In the upper Tigris valley, Sophene's expansion faced another *regnum minus*, Gordyene, which at times could expand into Arzanene. In turn, Sophene's extreme eastern expansion in the Mesopotamian plain faced Adiabene at the time of Adiabene's westernmost expansion. It should be stressed that Sophene's acquisitions southeast of the Tauros became very closely integrated into Sophene as a geopolitical and cultural entity.²³⁷ Indeed, the very name of the territory between the western Tigris and the Batman River, *Sophanene* (likely coined after the Semitic version of the

234 Marciak 2012a, 337.

235 Wheeler 2002, 89; Marciak 2012a, 337.

236 Marciak 2012a, 337.

237 Unfortunately, we have very little evidence to answer a few important questions concerning the character of ties in this area. For instance, when and to what extent did a newly acquired country become a representative part of the whole in terms of its material culture? Was political sovereignty over another country accompanied by migration of its population or introduction of its elites into the social structure of a newly acquired country? The fact that the name of the region between the western Tigris and the Batman was coined after the name of a geopolitical entity primarily located in the lower Arsianias river suggests that these questions should not be ignored or dismissed out of hand. At any rate, the distinction between “original Sophene” and “the kingdom of Sophene” (including many lands more or less briefly acquired) is accepted by scholars. See Adontz, Garsoïan 1970, 32; Hewsen 1985, 59; Sinclair 1989, 139; Syme 1995, 51.

heartland's name) is clear-cut proof of the very close political and cultural ties of this area with the Sophene heartland.²³⁸

At the same time, starting with Ptolemy's evidence at the beginning of the second century CE, the clear process of geopolitical partition becomes evident. There appear out of Sophene as a geopolitical entity several separate geopolitical entities in ancient sources: Sophene Šahuni (in the sense of the modern Dersim and the lower Murat valley, but without Anzitene), Anzitene, Balabitene, Asthianene, Ingilene, and Sophanene.²³⁹ Many later sources confirm this regional mosaic: Petros Patrikios, Prokopios, Byzantine legislations, and Armenian sources (the *Epic Histories* in particular). On the one hand, this process of geopolitical partition must have had cultural and ethnic features: the Justinian legislation and Ammianus Marcellinus explicitly use the term *ἔθνη/gentes* with regard to the countries in question. They all must have had local noble families holding hereditary power in their districts.²⁴⁰ On the other hand, all these countries are occasionally called simply Sophene (Cop'k') in our sources (*MX* 2.8; *ASX* 5.22.2 as a synonym to *Armenia Quarta*), which either echoes the fact that they all once belonged to the kingdom of Sophene or suggests that despite all the cultural and ethnic differences between them there was still some common cultural base connecting them all.²⁴¹

238 Marciak 2012a, 338.

239 Marciak 2012a, 338. Likewise Wheeler 2002, 89–90 and Hewsén 2002b.

240 Marciak 2012a, 338.

241 Marciak 2012a, 338.

Cultural Landscape of Sophene¹

2.1 Literary Sources

2.1.1 *Sophene's Siedlungsgeschichte?*

Strabo of Amaseia is the first important literary source that gives us an insight into Sophene's cultural landscape. In *Geog.* 11.14.12, Strabo tells us a remarkable story:²

There is an ancient story of the Armenian race to this effect: that Armenos of Armenion, a Thessalian city, which lies between Pherae and Larisa on Lake Boibeïs, as I have already said, accompanied Jason into Armenia; and Kyrtilos the Pharsalian and Medios the Larisaean, who accompanied Alexander, say that Armenia was named after him, and that, of the followers of Armenos, some took up their abode in Akilisene, which in earlier times was subject to the Sopheni, whereas others took up their abode in Syspiritis, as far as Kalachene and Adiabene, outside the Armenian mountains. They also say that the clothing of the Armenians is Thessalian ...

This story is connected with a tradition about the Argonautic expedition and is retold by Strabo a few times in his work (*Geog.* 11.4.8; 11.14.12; 16.1.24–25; 16.2.5; and 16.1.4), and will also refer to Gordyene and Adiabene. In short, the story tells about heroic adventures of Jason and his companions, known as the Argonauts, who went to faraway Kolchis to regain the Golden Fleece. However, many of Jason's companions did not return to Greece, but instead settled in foreign lands. This aspect of the Argonautic tradition is frequently understood as conveying a *Siedlungslegende*,³ i.e., a typically ancient founding myth seeking to explain the origin of an ethnos in connection to its famous ancestor (eponym), especially a Greek mythic ancestor, which suggests some affinity of a given ethnos to Greece.⁴

1 This chapter is a revised and expanded version of Marciak 2014b.

2 H. L. Jones 1928, 332–333.

3 See Markwart 1928, 213–215; Kahrstedt 1950, 59, n. 7; Dillemann 1962, 118.

4 Such stories were popular and widespread in ancient times, especially with regard to Greek-Roman and Oriental cultures. For the example of the foundation of Rome and Hellenistic Judaism, see Gruen 1998, 254–260; Hard 2004, 584–588; Mason 2007, 484, 490–491.

In 11.14.12, the focus is placed on Armenia. The origin of other countries in the region, Akilisene, Syspiritis, Kalachene and Adiabene, is treated under the heading of an ancient story (ἀρχαιολογία) of the Armenian race (ἔθνος). Consequently, mythic eponyms of these countries are merely presented (and consequently subsumed) as “Armenos’ companions,” which shows that this tradition is written from the Armenian perspective. That is to say, it presents settlements in other countries as originated from (or at least secondary towards) Armenia. For instance, such an understanding of Adiabene’s origin has been labeled as “Armenian Adiabene.”⁵ Remarkably, as far as Sophene is concerned, it is not really included in the list of countries founded by “Armenos’ companions” (unlike its close neighbor to the north, Akilisene). This is actually very striking if we take account of later Armenian sources that perceive rulers of Sophene as members of the Armenian commonwealth. Quite to the contrary, in *Geog.* 11.14.12 Strabo uses an ethnonym, Σωφηνοί. His reference to the Sopheneans stands in contrast to the story of the Greek (mythical) foundation of Armenia. In this light, the origin of Sophene does not appear to be Armenian in character.⁶

2.1.2 *The Cult of Anāhitā in Sophene*

Another revealing detail about Sophene’s cultural landscape can be found in Plutarch’s description of the march of the Roman legions under Lucullus against the Parthian king Tigranes the Great (Tigranes II), in 69 BCE (*Luc.* 24.4–8). The Romans crossed the Euphrates at Tomisa, and upon entering Sophene,⁷ found themselves in a remarkable countryside, which is described by Plutarch in some detail: it was full of pastures for young sacrificial cows, which bore the brand of a torch on their heads, and were allowed to roam freely around, since they were used exclusively for sacrifice to “Artemis of Persia.” Lucullus sacrificed one of these cows to the goddess, and sacrificed a bull to the Euphrates, in acknowledgment of a safe passage (*Luc.* 24.6–7).⁸ Referring to an Oriental deity by a Greek name is a well-known practice of *interpretatio graeca*.⁹ It was the Iranian goddess Anāhitā who was most frequently seen by the Greeks as a Persian equivalent of their Greek goddess Artemis.¹⁰

5 Sellwood 1985, 457.

6 Wheeler 2002, 93–94.

7 Eckhardt 1910a, 82; Holmes 1923, 192; Weissbach 1927b, 1016; Magie 1950, 344; Dillemann 1962, 117; Sherwin-White 1984, 177; Wheeler 1991, 506, n. 7; McGushin 1992, 171; Olbrycht 2009, 69.

8 Perrin 1914, 548–549.

9 De Jong 1997, 29.

10 Chaumont 1965, 170 and n. 15 on 179; Boyce, Chaumont, Bier 2011.

Furthermore, Plutarch's description of Lucullus' behavior corresponds with essential aspects of the cult of Anāhitā: she was seen as the personification of water and venerated near springs and watercourses, while bulls were in turn the animals most frequently sacrificed to her.¹¹ The cult of Anāhitā was very popular in the Hellenistic East. In particular, Sophene's neighbor to the north, Akilisene, was famous for its cult of Anāhitā to such an extent that it was interchangeably called Akilisene and *Anaitica*, literally the land of Anaitis (Cass. Dio 36.48.1, 36.53.5; Pliny the Elder *HN* 5.83, possibly 6.84 as well).¹²

2.1.3 *Sophene and Tigranes the Great*

Concerning Lucullus' march through Sophene, there is yet another interesting detail that comes to the fore. According to Plutarch, the population of Sophene (like that of Gordyene) was positively disposed towards the Roman legions traversing its territory (*Luc.* 24.8). Of course, there may have been many reasons for this reaction on the side of the Sophene population. However, their disposition does stand in striking contrast to the conviction held by some scholars that Sophene was ethnically Armenian and consequently Tigranes II's purpose behind his conquests (including Sophene and Gordyene) was to unite "one people under one ruler."¹³ If this were the case, one could expect to see some resistance in Sophene against the Romans. On the contrary, we do not see about anything like this. Instead, we have positive evidence that the cause of the Romans appeared to have more appeal to the population of Sophene than that of Tigranes II.

2.1.4 *Sophene and the Transtigritani*

Interesting details concerning the cultural and ethnical profile of the territories once belonging to the kingdom of Sophene can be found in Byzantine sources. As we already know, what was known in geographical sources (Strabo and Pliny the Elder) and early Roman historiography (Plutarch and Tacitus) by a single name, Sophene (occupying a large territory from the Munzur Mountains across the Tauros into the upper Tigris valley), became partitioned into separate geopolitical entities, especially Sophene (occupying the modern Dersim and the lower Murat valley), Anzitene, Balabitene, Asthianene, Ingilene, and Sophanene.¹⁴

It is revealing to observe what terminology ancient writers used for these geopolitical entities. Festus (a fourth-century-CE author) and Zosimos (who

11 Boyce, Chaumont, Bier 2011.

12 Dillemann 1962, 117; de Jong 1997, 276–277; Boyce, Chaumont, Bier 2011.

13 Bedoukian 1978, 12.

14 Adontz, Garsoïan 1970, 27.

flourished at the end of the fifth century and beginning of the sixth century CE) refer to the countries of the 298 CE Roman-Sasanian peace treaty as *gentes* or ἔθνη. The Byzantine legislations (*Corpus Iuris Civilis*, especially *Cod. Iust.* 1.29.5 and *Leg. Nov.* 31.1.3) also classify them as *gentes* / ἔθνη (in the sixth century when they were already part of the Roman provincial administration). This is a strictly ethnic terminology that shows that the populations in these territories were culturally and ethnically distinctive from their neighbors.¹⁵ For instance, they were distinct from those included in the province *Armenia Magna* (renamed as *Armenia Tertia* in 527 CE, once part of the Armenian crown but incorporated into the Roman Empire in 390 CE following the partition of Armenia between Roman and Persia in ca. 387 CE) and *Prima* and *Secunda Armenia* (west of the Euphrates, previously called *Lesser Armenia*). What is more, it also suggests cultural and ethnic differences between the populations of these six territories once belonging to the Hellenistic kingdom of Sophene.¹⁶ At the same time, the fact that the six *gentes* are still just called Sophene (Cōp'k' in Armenian) in Armenian sources (*Moses Khorenats'i* 2.8; *The Geography of Ananias of Širak* 5.22.2) may also indicate the existence of a common base (cultural, political, or perhaps ethnic after all) between these *gentes*, despite all their cultural and ethnic differences.

Furthermore, the rulers of the *gentes* are called satraps (σατράπαι) by Prokopios of Caesarea in the sixth century CE (*Aed.* 3.1.17–27). The institution of satraps is clearly of Iranian origin. The term itself goes back to the Iranian **khshathrapāvā* (meaning “protector of the province”).¹⁷ This office was first used in the Achaemenid Empire,¹⁸ with Alexander the Great and the diadochoi adopting it from the Persian administration.¹⁹ It is also known to have been in use under the Parthians and the Sasanians.²⁰ Broadly speaking, the institution of satraps referred to subordinate rulers who enjoyed some amount of autonomy in their provinces, but, at the same time, were always subdued to another higher authority, especially to that of the king (of the kings) in an Iranian context.²¹ It is actually very striking that this institution of Iranian

15 Adontz, Garsoïan 1970, 26.

16 Toumanoff 1963, 166–167; Adontz, Garsoïan 1970, 27–28.

17 R. Schmitt 1976; Iren 2010, 250, n. 12; Shapour Shahbazi 2012, 132.

18 Briant 2002, 62–67; Olbrycht 2010a, 103–104; Frye 1984, 110–113; Shapour Shahbazi 2012, 131–132.

19 Frye 1984, 116; Venetis 2012, 155.

20 Dąbrowa 2012, 181 (the Parthians); Olbrycht 2013, 148–149, 196 (the Parthians); Olbrycht 2010a, 258 (the Sasanians).

21 Briant 2002, 62–67.

background was accepted by the Romans in their conduct with dependent rulers of the *gentes Transtigritanae*.

The fact that the *regiones Transtigritanae* were the site of local hereditary nobility of high political autonomy is also confirmed by Armenian sources: rulers of the *gentes* are usually termed *iškhan* (*prince*) or *nakharar* (*noble*) and presented as hereditary and highly autonomous rulers. However, in the view of the Armenian sources, they were also members of the Armenian nobility under sovereignty of the Armenian king (though frequently only *de iure* and not *de facto*).²² Generally speaking, it also seems that, given the frequency of references in Armenian sources and the terminology used for the offices, the local dynasties of Sophene Šahuni, Anzitene and Saphanene played more important roles than those of Ingilene, Asthianene, and Balabitene. Namely, Sophene Šahuni is termed *aškarh* (meaning a *realm*) in *BP* 3.12, which could possibly allude to its highly autonomous status;²³ Zareh, ruler of Saphanene, is called the *nahapet* in *BP* 3.12; in *BP*, this term means “a senior member and consequently head of a nakharar family.”²⁴ Likewise, the Anzitene nobility held the office of *hazarapet* (perhaps a civil office denoting the function of a *chancellor*) possibly for at least a few generations.²⁵

2.1.5 *Sophene's Location and Cultural Affiliation*

Geographical and ethnographical texts can help us determine the original territory of Sophene and understand subsequent geopolitical developments in the region. In addition, it has been suggested that a geographical location may speak volumes about the cultural affiliation of a given country.²⁶ In this context, it is interesting to note that geographical (and later Byzantine administrative) texts give us a mixed signal.

On the one hand, Strabo sees Sophene as a distinctive part of Greater Armenia (see *Geog.* 11.12.4 and *Geog.* 11.12.3 in particular: Σωφηνή τῆς μεγάλης Ἀρμενίας). Likewise, Ptolemy treats Sophene and Anzitene under the heading of countries located in Greater Armenia (*Geogr.* 5.13.13).²⁷ Pliny the Elder also

22 See Toumanoff 1963, 170–179 (with caution); Adontz, Garsoïan 1970, 1970, 25–37; Hewsens 2001, 74. For the fact that even this picture of the *de iure* but not *de facto* sovereignty may be treated as at least an oversimplification (if not a biased attempt to disguise the real independence of the elites of the *gentes*), see Garsoïan 1971, esp. 344–345.

23 Garsoïan 1989, 456, who, however, also remarks that the term is used with little consistency in *BP*.

24 Garsoïan 1989, 548.

25 See Garsoïan 1989, 531–532. See also Hewsens 2002b, 126–128.

26 Wheeler 2002, 89–90.

27 The sigla are given according to Stückelberger, Graßhoff 2006.

mentions two cities of Sophene, Arsamosata and Arkathiokerta, and counts them among the famous cities of Greater Armenia (*HN* 6.26). The label of Armenia is also attached to this region by Byzantine administrative legislations, which named this province *Armenia Quarta* (*Leg. Nov.* 31.1.3). Prokopios (*Aed.* 3.2.1.–3.2.2., 3.1.16–17), who paints the picture of politically semiautonomous and culturally distinctive satraps, also uses the term Armenia (e.g. 3.2.2: ἐν Ἀρμενίᾳ τῇ Σοφανηγῇ καλουμένῃ) and Armenian (e.g. 3.2.1: ἐν τοῖς Ἀρμενίων ἔθνεσιν) with regard to the countries in question. In his picture, the satrapies in the region appear to have unique features, but the general label Armenian in a geographical but also ethnic sense still applies to them.

On the other hand, both Pomponius Mela (fl. around 40 CE) and (again) Pliny the Elder (23 or 24 CE–79 CE, who used Mela as one of his sources), mention Sophene as part of Syria, which itself is understood in a broad sense as much of the Fertile Crescent (Pomp. Mela 1.53; *HN* 5.66).²⁸ Likewise, *Laterculus Polemii Silvii* 93 (list of Roman provinces dated to 448–449 CE) lists *Sophanene* as a province in the Roman *Oriens* (together with Mesopotamia, Euphratensia [Eufratesia], and Osrhoene [Hosroene]). Remarkably, although, as mentioned above, Prokopios (*Aed.* 3.2.1.–3.2.2., 3.1.16–17) uses the term Armenia and Armenian with regard to the countries in question, his description of the region starts with the label of countries located in Mesopotamia (*Aed.* 3.2.1: ἄρξομαι δὲ ἀπὸ τῶν ἐν Μεσοποταμίᾳ χωρίων). What is more, new administrative reforms at the beginning of the seventh century CE attested in *Descriptio Orbis Romani* used two names interchangeably for the regions around Amida and Martyropolis: *Armenia Quarta* (as previously in the Byzantine administration) and *Mesopotamia*.

To summarize, given the message conveyed through geographical (and administrative) texts, Sophene does not really appear as a country that can be easily categorized in terms of broader geographical (and administrative) and consequently cultural affiliations. It can be labeled as neither predominantly Armenian²⁹ nor predominantly Syrian-Mesopotamian,³⁰ but it rather appears as a country located very much ‘in-between,’ specifically between Greater Armenia and Mesopotamia.

28 For the fact that see Syria and Assyria are frequently used interchangeably in ancient sources and may cover much of the territory of the ancient Mesopotamia, see Nöldeke 1871, 443–468; Herzfeld 1968, 306–308; Rollinger 2006, 283–287.

29 Hewsen 1984, 357–364; Hewsen 1985, 58–60; Kessler 2001.

30 To some extent Wheeler 2002, 91.

2.1.6 Christianity in Sophene

Armenian sources refer to the process of Christianization in the territories once belonging to the kingdom of Sophene. The sources mention missionary activities of a number of the fourth-century-CE Armenian saints, especially: St. Aristakes, son and successor of St. Gregory the Illuminator, in Sophanene (Cop'k' in *BP* 3.2³¹); St. Epip'an in Sophanene (Cop'k' Mec), especially near a place called Mambrē on the Mamuşel river, likely to be identified as the vicinity of the upper reaches of the Batman River³² (see *BP* 3.14,³³ *BP* 5.27–28³⁴); and St. Nerses in Sophanene (Cop'k' in *BP* 4.14,³⁵ see also *BP* 4.4³⁶). Likewise, *BP* 3.12 recalls Christian “ministers from the palatine church of the royal fortress of Bnabel in the district of Cop'k' Mec,” which could perhaps be sought in the vicinity of modern Benabil near Mardin.³⁷ In turn, as for Sophene Šahuni, their two rulers, Noy and Varaz, are mentioned as attending the inauguration of two Armenian patriarchs, Nerses and Yusik I (respectively, *BP* 4.4³⁸ and *BP* 3.12³⁹), which implies the submission of the territory of Sophene Šahuni to state-led Christianization coming from Greater Armenia.

However, the picture of the spread of Christianity in Sophene as an integral part of Christianization of Greater Armenia should be supplemented by sources showing the other possible direction of the arrival and influence of Christianity into Sophene: Syriac-speaking Christianity from Edessa.⁴⁰ It is in this context that various legends about St. Thaddeus belong (e.g. *BP* 3.1⁴¹), showing close ties between Edessa and Eğil.⁴² Likewise, the traditions concerning Mashtots' and his invention of the Armenian script in Edessa for ecclesiastical purposes (e.g. *Moses Khorenats'i* 3.54⁴³) point to the same direction of

31 Garsoïan 1989, 67.

32 Sinclair 1994–95, 194–195, n. 15; Sinclair 1989, 281–282, 292.

33 Garsoïan 1989, 90.

34 Garsoïan 1989, 206–207.

35 Garsoïan 1989, 139.

36 Garsoïan 1989, 111.

37 Sinclair 1989, 340–341, 371–372.

38 Garsoïan 1989, 111.

39 Garsoïan 1989, 82.

40 See Thomson 2006b, 97–110. See also Garsoïan 1971, who, emphasizing the autonomy of the satrapies as independent Armenian states, suggests that Christianization could take firm root in the satrapies before the official Christianization of Greater Armenia. Therefore, the traditional label of the beginning of Christianity in Armenia (as such) may rather belong to the satrapies and not to Greater Armenia.

41 Garsoïan 1989, 67.

42 Wheeler 2002, 91–92; Thomson 2006b, 107–109.

43 Thomson 2006a, 322–323.

influence in the implementation of early Christianity in (Greater) Armenia, and the more so (due to geographical proximity) in Sophene.⁴⁴ In fact, most of pre-Islamic church remains in this region can be found in the upper Tigris valley and especially south of the Tigris (located where the territorial extension of Sophene could reach at its farthest point). Their architecture can usually be labeled as typical of Syriac Christianity.⁴⁵

What is more, the ecclesiastical administration in the *Transtigritanae regiones* was separate from the ecclesiastical administration of Greater Armenia. The ecclesiastical metropolis was placed at Amida and the metropolis bore the name *Mesopotamia*. Amida's metropolitan bishops are mentioned in church acts of the following synods and councils:⁴⁶ Maras (Μεσοποταμίας Μαράς πόλεως Ἀμίδη [corrected from Ἐμίσσης]) in the Council of Constantinople in 381 CE; Asterios (Ἀστέριος Ἀμίδης μητροπολίτης) in the Council of Ephesos in 431 CE (ACO I.1.5, p. 132 §13);⁴⁷ and Simeon ("episcopus Amidæ metropolis Mesopotamiae") in the Council of Ephesos II in 449 CE (ACO II.3.1, pp. 179, 254 §39 and xl).⁴⁸ Only from around the middle of the fifth century CE on did the ecclesiastic structure of the metropolis of Amida greatly expand, and we hear of more other bishoprics (for personal names of the bishops, see chapter 2.4.2.) within the metropolis of Amida: Anzitene, Ingilene,⁴⁹ Sophene (Šahuni),⁵⁰ Sophanene,⁵¹ and Balabitene (and Kephass) taking part in the

44 Thomson 2006b, 100–102, 104–105.

45 See Sinclair 1989, 161–196, 230–357.

46 See Garsoïan 1988 and 1998, who is essentially followed here.

47 Schwartz, Straub 1914–1984 (1.1.5), 132.

48 Schwartz, Straub 1914–1984 (2.3.1.), 179 and 254.

49 The relevant text is corrupted. See Garsoïan 1988, 274–275, n. 103. The reading Εὐσέβιος ἐπ. Ἰγγίλης has been suggested by Honigmann 1942–43, 45, 53 (§466), 60 (§466), 72 (§466), 76. At any rate, the see of Ingilene is attested later by the *Notitia Antiochena* and the Second Council of Chalcedon (the *Three-Chapter Controversy*) in 553 CE.

50 Which follows from the reading "Caiumas Sufaniensis," according to Schwartz, Straub 1914–1984 (1982, 83, s.n. Caiumas (5)) and Garsoïan 1988, 275, n. 104 (see also E. Schwartz 1937, 52 and Honigmann 1942–43, 45, 53 (§468)). The interpretation of Bishop Kaioumas in the Council of Chalcedon as the representative of Sophene (and not Sophanene) results from the fact that Sophanene was already mentioned as the see of Bishop Zebbenos in the Chalcedon acts. At any rate, the existence of the episcopal see in Sophene is assumed under Arsamosata in the *Notitia Antiochena*, and possibly by the appearance of Bishop Kyriakos attested in the acts of the council at Constantinople in 536 CE. See Garsoïan 1988, 278, n. 120.

51 To be precise, it was represented in Chalcedon by Bishop Zebennos of Martyropolis. The city name Martyropolis obviously stands here (as in *Descriptio Orbis Romani*) for the district of Sophanene. See Garsoïan 1988, 274, n. 100 and 275, n. 104.

Council of Chalcedon in 451 CE (ACO II.2.2, p. 69[161] §109–114).⁵² As we learn from the *Notitia Antiochena* (a short list of bishoprics for the patriarchate of Antioch; created in 570 CE at the time of patriarch Anastasius of Antioch), the metropolis of Mesopotamia was under jurisdiction of the patriarchate in Antioch, and included the sees of Martyropolis, Ingilene, Balabitene, Arsamosata, Sophene, Kitharizon, Cephae, and Zeugma (unknown, but not identical with Zeugma on the Euphrates).⁵³ By contrast, episcopal sees in Greater Armenia were under the jurisdiction of the bishop of Caesarea in Cappadokia (from an ecclesiastical point of view) until the middle of the fifth century, when it became autocephalous after its rejection of the decrees of the Chalcedon council.⁵⁴

Thus, in light of the evidence gleaned from the sources concerning the ecclesiastical administration of Eastern churches, it is evident that the Christianity of the *Transtigritanes regiones* had closer ties to Syrian and Mesopotamian Christianity than to Christianity coming from Greater Armenia. In time, these developed into Syriac-speaking Christian communities

2.2 Papyrological and Epigraphic Evidence

Several interesting insights into Sophene's cultural landscape can be gained from extant papyrological and epigraphic evidence.⁵⁵

2.2.1 *Papyrus Euphratensis* no. 9

The first piece of evidence comes from an archive of 21 documents (on papyri and leather) that came to light in 1988.⁵⁶ The documents, composed in Greek and Syriac, are dated to the third century CE and come from the middle Euphrates region.⁵⁷ Document no. 9, dated to 13 June 252, is the deed of sale of a female slave, *Qardannaea Diane*.⁵⁸ The text informs us briefly about Diane's background: she was born in the district Ortene, originally belonged to the

52 Schwartz, Straub 1914–1984 (1936 (2.2.2), p. 69 [161]).

53 Honigmann 1925, esp. 73–84.

54 For the ecclesiastical situation in Greater Armenia (and the political factor), see Garsoïan 1983.

55 See also Wheeler 2002.

56 See Feissel, Gascoü 1989 (Greek documents) and Teixidor 1989 (Syriac texts important for the history of Edessa).

57 Feissel, Gascoü 1989, 537, 540–545.

58 Feissel, Gascoü 1989, 559.

wife of a centurion of the Legion I Parthica stationed at Nisibis, and was next sold to a villager living in Abourene, and finally in 252 CE to a resident of Beth Phouria.⁵⁹

How does this document contribute to our understanding of Sophene's cultural landscape? Nisibis, Abourene, and Beth Phouria are all toponyms that belong to the upper Euphrates region marked by the confluence of the Euphrates and the Syrian (Western) Khabur.⁶⁰ Most importantly, the toponym Ortene is known from later, especially Syriac sources, from which we can infer that it was located in Anzitene.⁶¹ Also, Ortene's population spoke neither Armenian nor Aramaic, but instead had their own distinctive language (see John of Ephesos, *Vitae* 554, *HE* 3.6.14).⁶² In this light, Papyrus Euphratensis no. 9 shows that local culture(s) in Sophene could also feature highly distinctive characteristics which defy any strict labeling in accordance with, so to speak, mainstream cultural elements (Greek, Roman, Armenian, Aramaic). Furthermore, the adaptation of the nickname Diane by a native of Anzitene also suggests that this local population had to partly adapt to the current cultural mainstream—in this case, to a dominant Greco-Roman culture.⁶³ Lastly, it can also be said that the document testifies to “Sophene's commercial ties with Nisibis and northern Mesopotamia” in the third century CE.⁶⁴

2.2.2 *The Özkonak Epitaph*

Everett Wheeler has suggested another item possibly relevant to our understanding of Sophene's cultural landscape:⁶⁵ a late-third-century epitaph from Özkonak located on the northern slopes of Mt. Idis (north of the Halys River and some 60 km north of Caesarea in Kappadokia).⁶⁶ The epitaph commemorates an Armenian eunuch named Euphrates who spent most of his life in Kappadokia, where he reached some social importance, but who originally came from Armenia.⁶⁷ However, it is not exactly known which part of

59 Feissel, Gascou 1989, 544, 559.

60 Feissel, Gascou 1989, 544, nn. 44–45; Wheeler 2002, 120.

61 For Ortene, see Nöldeke 1879b, 163–165; Hübschmann 1904, 235–236; Markwart 1930, 49* (who sees the Ortene population as the remnant of Urartu (which is very unclear); Dillemann 1962, 313–314; Luther 1997, 174–175 and n. 288.

62 Nöldeke 1879b, 164; Luther 1997, 174; Wheeler 2002, 120.

63 The introduction of Roman names has been classified as one of the major aspects of Romanization in the East according to MacMullen 1963, 96.

64 Wheeler 2002, 120.

65 Wheeler 2002, 120.

66 See the text, translation, and commentary by Drew-Bear 1984 and Pleket, Stroud 1984.

67 Cooper, Decker 2012, 188.

Armenia the eunuch came from. His name indicates that he was born in a part of Armenia located along the course of the Euphrates, i.e., possibly from Greater Armenia, Lesser Armenia, Akilisene, or Sophene. Out of these options, the least likely one is that Euphrates was born in Lesser Armenia, since at that time it was an integral part of the Roman Empire and Roman law prohibited the castration of young boys (a rule which, however, was not always respected). As a result, eunuchs were usually imported from outside the empire, especially from the Near East, including in particular the area from Mesopotamia to the eastern coast of the Black Sea.⁶⁸ Thomas Drew-Bear, the editor of the epitaph, understood Armenia as Greater Armenia and this interpretation is definitely possible.⁶⁹ However, Akilisene or Sophene, as suggested by Wheeler, also comes into play.⁷⁰ If Euphrates was born in Sophene, then the Özkonak epitaph can be taken as another example of, broadly speaking, Oriental, but more specifically, Iranian influence in Sophene.⁷¹

2.2.3 *The Kharput Inscriptions*

Three Latin inscriptions discovered near Kharput also contribute to our knowledge of Sophene's culture.⁷² The inscriptions were made on behalf of Aurelius Fulvus, the legate of Emperor Nero, in the Legio III Gallica stationed at Ziata in Sophene, and can be dated to 64 CE (as they refer to titles and offices held by Nero, especially to his 11th tribunician power).⁷³ The discovery of this inscription and its date reveal two things.

First, in terms of political history, the discovery may be important for discussing the political fate of Sophene after the peace agreement at Rhandea between Rome and Parthia in 63 CE. Although most scholars believe that Sophene reverted to the kingdom of (Greater) Armenia,⁷⁴ it has also been argued that Sophene became a Roman client kingdom and that the Kharput

68 Drew-Bear 1984, 141; Pleket, Stroud 1984; Wheeler 2002, 120.

69 Drew-Bear 1984, 141.

70 Wheeler 2002, 120.

71 This is, of course, not to say that eunuchs were not known in many other cultures, but from the Roman perspective this phenomenon was particularly Oriental. It should be noted that in the Ancient Near East it was the Achaemenid Empire where the presence of eunuchs at the royal court became fully institutionalized. See O. Patterson 1982, 315 and Briant 2002, 268–277. See also Amm. Marc. 16.7.5 for his description of what is considered to be a typical example of how some eunuchs could climb up the social ladder in Byzantium.

72 CIL III 6741/6742, 6742a.

73 Wheeler 2002, 114; Whitfield 2012, 49–50.

74 Hewsen 2001, 37.

inscriptions back up this possibility.⁷⁵ This interpretation would not mean a formal incorporation, but political influence and military presence. The latter would mean the existence of a number of Roman forts in Sophene as sorts of advanced outposts (*praetenturae*).⁷⁶

Second, the presence of Roman troops in Sophene and, more importantly, the possibility of Rome's political protectorate over Sophene even before its formal incorporation (as late as by Emperor Justinian I in 536 CE), raises the question of the influence of Roman culture in that territory. In general, other extant data on Roman cultural influence in the region mainly concern remains of infrastructure (cities, forts, roads, and bridges), but we also have hints at other aspects of cultural influence (though from later periods) which could be labeled as belonging to the 'high culture' (amphitheater in Amida, see below).

2.2.4 *The Boşat Relief*

The Tigris region is known for numerous ancient rock-cut reliefs of monumental size. Most reliefs come from Assyrian times.⁷⁷ However, several reliefs can be dated to the Hellenistic period or Roman-Parthian times.⁷⁸ The most well-known relief is located in the vicinity of Martyropolis, at Boşat, a village located 12 km north of the city and at the foot of the Hazro hills.

The Boşat relief (see Figure 11) features a man sitting on a rightward-prancing horse and another standing figure to the left (additionally, below the relief is a simple rock-cut tomb-chamber).⁷⁹ It has been argued that these two presentations are independent of each other (as they seem to be carved into two niches of different depths), i.e., the standing figure belongs to an earlier relief which perhaps presented a sacrifice scene (which the standing figure looked at) and was connected with the presence of the tomb chamber.⁸⁰ The horseman, facing half-right, holds the horse's reins with his right hand, and his trousers are loose and have many horizontal pleats. The figure to the left is only partly preserved, and wears a long, pleated robe and a smock-like dress over it, with at least one arm raised forward.⁸¹

75 Wheeler 2002, 114–116.

76 Wheeler 2002, 116.

77 Ornan 2005, 134.

78 Algaze 1989, 249–250.

79 See Taylor 1865, 40; Nogaret 1983, 221–232; Sinclair 1989, 281.

80 Sinclair 1989, 281 and Gropp 1989, 122 who seem to have reached the same conclusion independently from each other and in contrast to Nogaret 1983.

81 Sinclair 1989, 281.

The horseman relief is definitely Parthian in style, and has been dated to the end of the second century or beginning of the third century CE.⁸² It is harder to date the earlier relief due to the poor state of preservation, but it does not seem to be much older.⁸³ Several scholars have attempted to identify the figures in the relief. Lehmann-Haupt suggested several possibilities: Shapur II,⁸⁴ Ardashir I,⁸⁵ or the Roman general Corbulo,⁸⁶ and another figure as embodying Armenia. In turn, Nogaret tentatively suggests a divinity and a member of local nobility for the horseman.⁸⁷ Lastly, according to Russell, “presumably, it depicts either the god Mithra or else, more likely, an Arm. Artaxiad king.”⁸⁸ However, it should be stressed that, given the state of preservation of the relief, all attempts to identify the figures are entirely speculative.

2.3 Numismatic Evidence

One can tentatively distinguish three groups of scholarship devoted to the coinage of Sophene. The first includes scholars from the 19th and early 20th centuries who laid the foundations for research on coins from this region. The second group embraces Armenian numismatists who dominated the scholarship on the coins from Kommagene, Sophene, and Armenia in the 20th century.⁸⁹ This group is responsible for several incorrect attributions of the Near Eastern coins to the rulers of Sophene (for instance, Charaspes, Morphilig, see below). Lastly, several modern scholars made a few contributions to the field.⁹⁰ They are very important, since, in many cases, they help correct statements made by scholars from the second group and show that there is still a lot of work to be done on coins from the region.

It is of great importance to stress that the current state of research on the coins from the region (Armenia, Sophene, Gordyene, and Adiabene) remains unsatisfactory. Above all, numerous identifications have thus far only been based on stylistic features. This approach has, however, led to many controver-

82 Sinclair 1989, 281–282; likewise Nogaret 1983, 230–231.

83 Sinclair 1989, 281.

84 Lehmann-Haupt 1910, 420.

85 Lehmann-Haupt 1931, 984.

86 Lehmann-Haupt 1926, 539.

87 Nogaret 1983, 231.

88 Russell 1987, 106, n. 83.

89 Bedoukian 1985; Nercessian 1995.

90 Alram 1986; de Callatay 1996; Facella 1999; Facella 2006.

sial or even, what now stands clearly, incorrect identifications. A few examples are warranted:

- 1 – In 1995 Y.T. Nercessian spoke of Charaspes as the king of Sophene (dated to before ca. 230 BCE). In Nercessian's view, "according to the evolution of the Armenian tiara, we can place Charaspes between Arsames I and Arsames II circa before 230 BCE. The Dioscurian royal tiaras are not as sharply pointed as the tiaras of Sames and Arsames I, but much more pointed than those of Arsames II."⁹¹ However, as more coins of Charaspes have come to the light, it became clear that Charaspes was a Scythian king and his coins were minted in Thrace and have nothing in common with Sophene.⁹² In this light, the alleged similarity of tiaras has been shown to be a baseless and incorrect speculation.
- 2 – The identification of Abdissar as the king of Sophene has been called into question first by E. Lipiński on linguistic and historical grounds,⁹³ and then by F. de Callataÿ who reinterpreted the inscription on one of Abdissar's coins as ΑΔΑΙΑΒΗΝΟΥ.⁹⁴ De Callataÿ's conclusions should close the discussion over Abdissar's identity. Abdissar was the king of Adiabene and not of Sophene.
- 3 – The identification of the coins of Zariadres and Morphilig is based on mistaken interpretations of abbreviations standing for names of the mints (see below). What is more, the name Morphilig as a Syriac name for a king of Sophene in the second century BCE is highly unlikely. First, all other names of kings of Sophene are Iranian; secondly, the name is not attested otherwise; and thirdly, it would be a very early attestation of a Syriac name.

To conclude, given the poor results of identifications based on entirely stylistic grounds, this study will accept the historical attribution of coins from Sophene only if a suggested figure is attested in other non-numismatic sources.

All coins from Sophene are made of copper and were issued in two values: *chalkos* and two *chalkoi*.⁹⁵

⁹¹ Nercessian 1995, 49.

⁹² Sayles 1999, 27.

⁹³ Lipiński 1982.

⁹⁴ De Callataÿ 1996.

⁹⁵ Bedoukian 1985; Alram 1986, 66.

1. Samos

As of 2011, eight coins attributed to Samos are known.⁹⁶ The obverse features the image of the king: the king's head is turned right, the king wears a tall, conical headgear with a diadem ending in a bow in the back with long strands falling down the neck.⁹⁷ Behind the head is a laurel branch and a border of dots.⁹⁸ The reverse features the image of Thyrsos of Dionysos between two interlaced *cornucopiae*.⁹⁹

The inscriptions ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ/ΣΑΜΟΥ and ΘΕΟΣΕΒΟΥΣ/ΚΑΙΔΙΚΑΙΟΥ appear left upward and right upward, respectively.¹⁰⁰

However, some of the coins attributed to Samos I by P. Bedoukian and Y.T. Necessian may in fact belong to Samos II and should consequently be dated to the middle of the second century BCE.¹⁰¹ This can be argued because of close parallels with the images on the coins of Antiochos VI Dionysos (145–142 BCE: a radiate crown of the king and the figure of Nike on the reverse),¹⁰² as well as with the inscriptions on the coins of Antiochos IV Epiphanes (the epithets ΘΕΟΣΕΒΗΣ and ΔΙΚΑΙΟΣ).¹⁰³

2. Arsames

As of 2011, the number of extant items is 91, 29 of which are attributed to Arsames I and 62 to Arsames II by some numismatists.¹⁰⁴ However, it is disputed whether all the coins bearing the inscription ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ/ΑΡΣΑΜΟΥ should be attributed to one or two kings bearing this name (see Figure 12).¹⁰⁵

In the case of Arsames, one can distinguish two distinct types of coinage bearing this name. The coins differ mainly when it comes to the headgear of the ruler. In the first case, the king has a conical tiara; in the second case, the tiara resembles a cap and does not have a sharp point.¹⁰⁶ Consequently, some numismatists suggest the existence of two different rulers identified as

96 Necessian 2011, 61. For the history of the identification of Samos' coins (which goes back to as early as 1754), see Bedoukian 1985, 9–10.

97 Bedoukian 1985, 10, 32; Necessian 1995, 48.

98 Bedoukian 1985, 10, 32; Necessian 1995, 48.

99 Bedoukian 1985, 10, 32; Necessian 1995, 48.

100 Bedoukian 1985, 10, 32; Necessian 1995, 48.

101 Facella 2006, 173–174 following Babelon 1890, CCVIII–CCIX. Likewise Alram 1986, 66–67.

102 Facella 2006, 173–174.

103 Facella 2006, 174.

104 Newell 1938, 25–35; Bedoukian 1985, 10–11, 32–33; Alram 1986, 67, 81–82; Necessian 1995, 48–50; Necessian 2011.

105 Facella 1999, 153–156; Facella 2006, 179–183; likewise Toumanoff 1963, 281. Babelon 1890, CXCH also knows of only one Arsames (dated to ca. 230 BCE).

106 Bedoukian 1985, 10–11, 32–33.

Arsames I and Arsames II, respectively.¹⁰⁷ However, it has also been argued that stylistic differences in the mode of the tiara presentation are not significant enough to suggest the existence of two different rulers.¹⁰⁸ In support of this idea, it has been noted that two different presentations of the ruler's headgear appear on coins attributed to Ariarathes IV Eusebes from Kappadokia (who reigned in ca. 220–163 BCE) and to Tigraios from Susa (ca. 138/137–133/132 BCE).¹⁰⁹ What is more, it appears that in the present state of knowledge of Armenian coinage, most attributions are tentative; thus, numismatic evidence can be only of secondary use for historical identifications of rulers of Sophene and other neighboring countries.

Two main groups of these coins can be distinguished depending on the type of the king's headdress, which always appears on the obverse: a pointed tiara with drapes covering the neck or a flat top tiara with a diadem which encircles the head and ends in a bow hanging down the neck.¹¹⁰

There is a great deal of diversity in designs on the obverse.¹¹¹ The majority feature images of a horseman, either advancing to the right toward a springing lion or advancing to the right with his spear pointed at (a) foot soldier(s). There also images of a nude figure (possibly Herakles, with the right arm extended from the elbow and the left arm holding a long club), of an eagle (turned right) holding a thunderbolt, caps of Dioscuri, and of the horse's head and neck (standing alone).

The image of an advancing horseman also appears on the coins of the first king of Kappadokia, Ariarathes IV Eusebes (ca. 220–163 BCE), and his father Ariaramnes (who reigned ca. 280–230 BCE).¹¹² This sets the most immediate chronological context for the coinage bearing the name Arsames and supports the attribution of all such coins to Arsames I, who reigned in the third century BCE.

It should be stressed that the only king bearing the name Arsames in ancient literary sources¹¹³ is mentioned as a participant in the fight between Seleukos II Kallinikos and Antiochos Hierax in ca. 227 BCE (Polyainos 4.17).¹¹⁴ The location of Arsames' seat is described enigmatically as "in the Armenian

107 Newell 1938, 25–35; Bedoukian 1985, 10–11, 32–33; Alram 1986, 67, 81–82; Nercessian 1995, 48–50; Nercessian 2011.

108 Facella 1999, 153–156; Facella 2006, 172, 179–183.

109 Facella 1999, 153–156; Facella 2006, 172, 179–183. For the coinage of Ariarathes IV and Tigraios, see Alram 1986, 60–61 and 142–143, respectively.

110 Bedoukian 1985, 10–11, 32–33; Nercessian 1995, 48–50.

111 Bedoukian 1985, 10–11, 32–33; Alram 1986, 81–82; Nercessian 1995, 48–50.

112 Simonetta 1977, 16–20; Mørkholm 1991, 131–132, 193; Alram 1986, 58–60.

113 Cauer 1895, 1271; E. Meyer 1903, 141.

114 H.H. Schmitt 1964, 37; Facella 2006, 174.

mountains" (Polyainos 4.17). In turn, the Nemrud Dağı inscriptions mention King Arsames as the ancestor of the Kommagene king, Antiochos I.¹¹⁵ The chronological context of the sequence of Antiochos I's predecessors suggest the second half of the third century BCE.¹¹⁶

The only direct (though assumed) connection between Arsames and Sophene is the existence of a royal capital of Sophene, Arsamosata. This city is first attested in ca. 212 BCE on the occasion of the beginning of Antiochos III's Eastern campaign.¹¹⁷ The city's name suggests that its founder (*ktistes*) bore a similar name. The name Arsames fulfills this requirement.

3. Xerxes

As of 2011, 18 coins have been attributed to the king Xerxes (see Figure 13).¹¹⁸

The obverse features the image of the king facing right. Xerxes's headdress is a kind of a folded tiara, slightly open on the side, with the diadem around the head and hanging in the back. The king is always heavily bearded.¹¹⁹

Several designs can be found on the reverse: Nike standing left, holding a crown or a wreath in her extended right arm, with the left hand resting on the belt of her tunic; or Athena, seated, holding the crown or a figure in her extended right hand and resting her left hand on a shield.¹²⁰ The inscriptions on the obverse, if present, are ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ/ΕΕΡΕΟΥ.¹²¹

Polybios 8.23 mentions a ruler by this name as a vassal of Antiochos (III or, less likely, IV Epiphanes).¹²² His royal seat was in Arsamosata, known from later sources as the capital of Sophene. It follows that Polybios' Xerxes reigned in Sophene.

Despite the earlier suggestions in scholarship, there is no evidence for the appearance of Xerxes in the Nemrud Dağı inscriptions.¹²³

4. Zariadres

As of 2011, only two items have been attributed to Zariadres, the king of Sophene known from Strabo *Geog.* 11.14.5.¹²⁴

115 E. Meyer 1903, 141; Facella 2006, 174–177.

116 Facella 2006, 174–177.

117 H.H. Schmitt 1964, 37–38.

118 See also Babelon 1890, CXCIV–CXC VII.

119 Bedoukian 1985, 12, 33–34.

120 Bedoukian 1985, 12–13, 33–34; Nercessian 1995, 51.

121 Bedoukian 1985, 33–34; Nercessian 1995, 51.

122 H.H. Schmitt 1964, 37–38; Bedoukian 1985, 12.

123 Facella 2006, 88–89.

124 Nercessian 2011, 61.

The obverse shows the king's head wearing a tiara with flaps under chin, on the reverse is a female figure standing, with her right hand raised and holding flowers, at her feet are two sphinxes, seated back to back. This figure has tentatively been suggested as 'Anaitis'.¹²⁵

This identification may still be seen as problematic, since the inscriptions on the reverses are only partially preserved. They are as follows: to the right downward ANISA/ΔΩ; to the left downward ΔΣAPI.¹²⁶

It was O. Blau who first completed the inscription ΔΣAPI as ΔΣAPI [ΑΔΡΙΣ] and attributed it to the king of Sophene known from *Geog.* 11.14.5.¹²⁷ Blau was followed by Babelon,¹²⁸ Justi,¹²⁹ Head,¹³⁰ and the Armenian numismatists Bedoukian¹³¹ and Nercessian,¹³² but was rejected by Regling¹³³ and Alram.¹³⁴ The reasons for rejecting this identification are clear: ANISA stands for a Kappadokian mint, Anissa, where the coins of the Kappadokian rulers Ariaramnes and Ariarathes III were issued.¹³⁵ The coins of Ariaramnes and Ariarathes III also envisage similar letters: ΔΣ and API.¹³⁶ In the first case, ΔΣ must be interpreted as a non-fully understood abbreviation of the title;¹³⁷ in the second case, API stand for a name of the rulers: APIAPAMNOY and APIAPAΘOY.¹³⁸

It should also be noted that A. Mousheghian and G. Depeyrot have recently called the authenticity of these coins into question.¹³⁹

125 Bedoukian 1985, 14; Nercessian 1995, 51.

126 Bedoukian 1985, 14; Nercessian 1995, 51.

127 Blau 1877, 106. Before Blau 1877, it was Friedlander 1877, 266 who published one such coin, but attributed it to the region at large.

128 Babelon 1890, CXCVIII.

129 Justi 1895, 16.

130 Head 1911, 754.

131 Bedoukian 1985, 14.

132 Nercessian 1995, 53.

133 Regling 1935, 15.

134 Alram 1986, 59, 66 n. 292.

135 Regling 1935, 1–23; Alram 1986, 59, 66 n. 292.

136 Regling 1935, 15; Alram 1986, 59, 66 n. 292.

137 Regling 1935, 15; Alram 1986, 59, 66 n. 292. Indeed, the letters disappear from Kappadokian coins with the assumption of the royal title (ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ) by Ariarathes III. See Alram 1986, 59, n. 240.

138 Regling 1935, 15; Alram 1986, 58–60.

139 Mousheghian, Depeyrot 1999, 31–32.

5. Morphilig

As of 2011, only two extant coins have been attributed to an enigmatic ruler named Morphilig by some scholars.

The first item is stored in the Berlin museum. It was first published by Friedlander.¹⁴⁰ The obverse is similar to that of Zariadres' coins: it features the head of the king (facing right) who wears a pointed tiara with the flaps tied under chin. The reverse likewise presents a female figure standing, the inscriptions to right downward is ΔΣΑΠΙ, and below the figure—ΜΟΠΙ.¹⁴¹

O. Blau suggested that the inscription ΜΟΠΙ[ΦΙΛΙΓΟΣ] ΣΑΠΙ[ΑΔΡΙΟΣ] be interpreted as Morphilig, son of Zariadres. In turn, P. Bedoukian and Y. T. Nercessian expanded the inscription in the following way: ΔΣΑΠΙ[ΑΔΡΙΟΣ] ΜΟΠΙ[ΦΙΛΙΟΣ].¹⁴² In view of these interpretations, Morphilig was a Semitic-Syriac name consisting of two elements: Mār and the Biblical name מַרְלִיג.¹⁴³ This name was believed to be attested in the *History of Mar Abas Katina* (preserved in the extract in the *Armenian History* attributed to Sebeos).

Another item attributed to Morphilig has never been published, but it appeared on the numismatic market and was sold at auction by the Classical Numismatic Group in 1995 (see Figure 15).¹⁴⁴

The obverse presents a diademed head facing right, wearing pot-shaped tiara; to the left of the head is a star and a small crescent to right. On the obverse is a female figure standing left and holding a filled wreath in her right hand. An inscription encircles the figure: a monogram to the left, [...]ΑΙΠ[...] above, [...] ΑΤΕ [...] to the right, and ΜΟΛΦΙΛΣ below.

However, as with the coins attributed to Zariadres, ΜΟΠΙ stands for Morima, the mint, where the coins of the Kappadokian ruler Ariarathes III were issued.¹⁴⁵ Again, ΔΣ must be interpreted as an abbreviation of the title,¹⁴⁶ and ΑΠΙ stands for the name ΑΠΙΑΡΑΘΟΥ.¹⁴⁷

In light of the Kappadokian numismatic parallels, the coins once attributed to Morphilig in fact belong to the Kappadokian ruler, Ariarathes III, and there

¹⁴⁰ Friedlander 1877, 266–267.

¹⁴¹ Bedoukian 1985, 14; Nercessian 1995, 53.

¹⁴² Bedoukian 1985, 14, 35.

¹⁴³ Babelon 1890, CXCIX.

¹⁴⁴ See <http://www.cngcoins.com/Coin.aspx?CoinID=168928>. Access 27 February 2015.

¹⁴⁵ Regling 1935, 1–23; Alram 1986, 59, 66 n. 292.

¹⁴⁶ Regling 1935, 15; Alram 1986, 59, 66 n. 292. Indeed, the letters disappear from Kappadokian coins with the assumption of the royal title (ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ) by Ariarathes III. See Alram 1986, 59, n. 240.

¹⁴⁷ Regling 1935, 15; Alram 1986, 58–60.

is no evidence whatsoever for the existence of the king of Sophene named Morphilig.

6. Arsakes

One coin bearing the name Arsakes has been suggested as belonging to a king of Sophene.

In 1870, P. Sibilian discussed a coin bearing the legend ΒΑΣΙΛΕ ΑΡΣΑΚΟ[Υ].¹⁴⁸ Next to the legend, the reverse also presents a female figure standing to the left, while the obverse shows a diademed (beardless) head facing right. In Sibilian's view, the coins should be attributed to an Armenian (Arsacid) king, who could be identified with Arsakes living around 120 BCE mentioned by Moses Khorenats'i.¹⁴⁹ Sibilian's suggestion was supported in 1877 by O. Blau, who in turn identified the ruler in question with Arsakes known from a brief reference in Stephen of Byzantium.¹⁵⁰

The female standing figure has been tentatively identified as Nike by P. Sibilian who saw "die stehende Nike im langen Gewände, nach links gewendet und in der rechten eine Standarte haltend."¹⁵¹ M. Alram also tentatively accepted the identification of the figure as that of Nike,¹⁵² while, in contrast, O. Blau spoke of "die kappadokische Artemis mit Speer und Schild."¹⁵³

No extant coins attributed to Parthian rulers with the title Arsakes bear an image of a female figure on the reverse. Therefore, the coin under discussion does not appear to be Parthian. Its identification is indeed intriguing, because there is a possibility that such a ruler would be confirmed by literary sources. Namely, unlike Strabo, Stephen of Byzantium knows of a ruler of Sophene named Arsakes who was deposed by Tigranes II. His name is usually considered as a mistaken reading of the name Artanes. However, it should be stressed that no extant coins of Artanes are known, while the numismatic case under discussion may provide tangible evidence in favor of Stephen's reading.

7. Arkathias

As of 2011, three coins have recently been identified as bearing the name Arkathias.¹⁵⁴

¹⁴⁸ Sibilian 1870, 343–345.

¹⁴⁹ Sibilian 1870, 344–345.

¹⁵⁰ Blau 1877, 111–113; Alram 1986, 69.

¹⁵¹ Sibilian 1870, 343.

¹⁵² Alram 1986, 69.

¹⁵³ Blau 1877, 112.

¹⁵⁴ Nercessian 2011, 61.

Arkathias' coins bear stylistic similarities to the coins of King Xerxes (see Figure 14).¹⁵⁵ The reverse presents the king's head facing left. The tiara is folded, with the diadem around the head and hanging in the back. The reverse presents Nike (but standing right and not left like on Xerxes' coins) holding a crown or a wreath in her extended arm. The inscription on the obverse, if present, is [B]ΑΣΙΛΕΩ[Σ]/ΑΡΚΑΘΙΟΥ.

Arkathias' identification with the kingdom of Sophene may be possible through onomastic data (see chapter 1.2). The second royal capital of Sophene known from literary sources is (the usual spelling) Karkathiokerta. However, it has been noted that neither Strabo's (Καρκαθιόκερτα) nor Pliny the Elder's form (*Arg(i)athicerta*) is the original; the name should instead be emended to Arkathiokerta.¹⁵⁶ Such a city-name would indicate its *ktistes*—Arkathias. This connection appears to be even stronger than in the case of Arsamosata and Arsames, as we do not know of any other similar city-names in the region or royal names in Armenian and Parthian dynasties.

It has been suggested that stylistic similarities indicate that Arkathias' reign followed that of Xerxes. Consequently, his reign may be tentatively dated to around the end of the second and the beginning of the first century BCE.¹⁵⁷

8. Unknown attributions

One coin with a partially preserved legend has been identified by Le Rider¹⁵⁸ and M. Alram¹⁵⁹ as belonging to an unidentified king of Sophene.

The obverse shows a bearded and diademed bust facing right.¹⁶⁰ The king's tiara is said to resemble the headgear of Xerxes. The reverse features the inscription and a seated female figure, most likely Athena, facing left, with her right hand rested on the shield and the left hand holding a Nike (facing right and holding a crown); Athena's spear is placed behind her.¹⁶¹

The partially preserved legend has been read as ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ []ΑΣΑΝΟΥ by M. Alram,¹⁶² but as ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ []ΑΒΑΝΟΥ by Le Rider¹⁶³ and Bedoukian.¹⁶⁴ As

¹⁵⁵ See Nercessian 2011.

¹⁵⁶ Chaumont 1995, 335.

¹⁵⁷ Nercessian 2011, 61.

¹⁵⁸ Le Rider 1959–60, 21.

¹⁵⁹ Alram 1986, 68–69.

¹⁶⁰ Le Rider 1959–60, 21.

¹⁶¹ Le Rider 1959–60, 21.

¹⁶² Alram 1986, 68–69.

¹⁶³ Le Rider 1959–60, 21.

¹⁶⁴ Bedoukian 1985, 15. Importantly, according to Seyrig 1955, 126, n. 44, only the last three letters []ΑΝΟΥ can be deciphered.

far as the attribution is concerned, Bedoukian tentatively suggested Artanes (see above), while Le Rider pointed to an enigmatic passage from *Pompeius Trogus* (*Prologus Libri* 41) that speaks of Artabanos and Tigranes as Arsakes' successors in Mesopotamia and Media.¹⁶⁵

Given the fact that the inscription is not entirely preserved and that, in the case of Artabanos, we lack any literary attestations of such a king of Sophene, this coin in the current state of research should not be attributed to Sophene.

2.4 Onomastic Data

2.4.1 Toponyms

In this chapter we will first analyze the names of the countries in question: Sophene (and Sophanene), Anzitene, and Ingilene; next, we will examine the names of the main cities in these territories.¹⁶⁶

Sophene and Sophanene

The two forms Σωφηνή and Σωφανηνή go back to the ethnonym *Šuppani* (**Šuppa(na)*), a people who inhabited this area in the first half of the first millennium BC and are frequently referred to in Hittite and Assyrian sources.¹⁶⁷ According to Adontz, this correlation is indirect. Σωφηνή is coined after the Armenian toponym *Cop'k'*, which itself is directly derived from *Šuppani* (and the Armenian final *k'* perfectly renders the suffix *-ani*); in turn, Σωφανηνή is formed after the Syriac *Šōphan-āyē* (which is a direct and the linguistically most correct preservation of the *Šuppani*).¹⁶⁸ Remarkably, the later Byzantine forms, Τζωφηνή and Τζωφανηνή, appear to be phonetically closer to the pre-Hellenistic name. As for the name of the sub-region, Sophene Šahuni, it has been suggested that the adjective of this name may be connected with the eighth-century-BC Hittite patronymic *šaḫ-uḫi*, borne of a Hittite prince or a royal family in this area.¹⁶⁹ Alternatively, this name could also

¹⁶⁵ For this passage, see Wolski 1940–46, 156–165.

¹⁶⁶ See a brief overview in Wheeler 2002, 90, n. 3.

¹⁶⁷ See Hübschmann 1904, 298; Levy 1965, 307, n. 10; Adontz, Garsoïan 1970, 33–34; Salvini 1972, 106; Forlanini 2004, 410; Barjamovic 2011, 129. Furthermore, an attempt to connect *Šuppani* with the name of Mt. Šuppina has not found much acceptance among scholars. See del Monte, Tischler 1978, 368, 559; Wheeler 2002, 90, n. 3.

¹⁶⁸ Adontz, Garsoïan 1970, 33–34.

¹⁶⁹ Toumanoff 1963, 167; Hewsén 1992, 156, n. 35; Hewsén 2002b, 127.

understood as containing the Persian word *šāh* (a king); consequently the whole construct would mean “Cop‘k‘ des Königs” (“royal Cop‘k“).¹⁷⁰

Anzitene and Ingilene

The origin of the toponyms Ἀνζιτηνή and Ἰγγηληνή can also be traced back to pre-Hellenistic and pre-Armenian names. *Ingilene* is frequently thought to correspond to the *Ingalave* of Hittite texts.¹⁷¹ But this identification has recently been called into question on geographical grounds, since *Ingalave* was located northwest of the Euphrates.¹⁷² Instead, *Anganu*, known from one of Tiglath-Pileser III's inscriptions, has been suggested.¹⁷³ Finally, *Anzitene* is clearly akin to *Enzi*, known from Neo-Assyrian texts.¹⁷⁴

Arsamosata

Ἀρσαμόσατα is mentioned by Polybios 8.23 as the royal seat of King Xerxes (see also Tac. *Ann.* 15.10.6; Plin. *HN* 6.26; and *Geogr.* 5.12.8.). This city name is widely interpreted as formed on the personal name Arsames, who must have been its royal founder.¹⁷⁵ The name of Arsames is definitely of Iranian origin; among others, it is attested in the Behistūn inscription for Dareios I's grandfather.¹⁷⁶

Arkathiokerta

More problematic is the case of a royal city mentioned by Strabo in *Geog.* 11.14.2. That is to say, according to Strabo, its name was Καρχαθιόκερτα. But Pliny the Elder, *HN* 6.26 and Stephen of Byzantium, most likely meaning the same city, use different forms: *Arg(i)athicerta* and Ἀρτεσικέρτα.¹⁷⁷ In turn, in Ptolemy *Geogr.* 5.13.22 we read Ἀρταγιγάρτα or Ἀρτατιγάρτα.¹⁷⁸ Strabo's form is widely accepted by scholars and used to emendate Pliny the Elder's and Stephen's names.¹⁷⁹ However, Markwart prefers Pliny the Elder's form, and suggests that it was named after Ἀρχαθίας. Or, if the emendation of Ptolemy's form into ΑΡΓΑΤΙΓΑΡΤΑ or ΑΡΤΑΤΙΓΑΡΤΑ is to be accepted, then one can suggest

170 Hübschmann 1904, 299.

171 Forrer, Unger 1932, 89; Toumanoff 1963, 297.

172 See Garstang, Gurney 1959, 36–39; del Monte, Tischler 1978, 141; Wheeler 2002, 90, n. 3.

173 Kessler 1995, 60; Wheeler 2002, 90, n. 3.

174 Russell 1984, 180–182; Wheeler 2002, 90, n. 3.

175 Toumanoff 1963, 281; Hewsens 1985, 59; Schottky 1989, 105; G.M. Cohen 2006, 45.

176 Lincoln 2007, 4.

177 Radt 2008, 318, n. 26.

178 Stückelberger, Graßhoff 2006, 556–557.

179 For instance: Manandian 1965, 35; Toumanoff 1963, 131, 301; Dillemann 1962, 117; Kettenhofen 1983, 453; Sinclair 1989, 416; Hewsens 2001, 37 and many others.

the personal names of Ἀρταξίας or Ἀρτάξης as underlying the city name.¹⁸⁰ It appears that recent numismatic evidence from the region—coins bearing the name Arkathias—offer a good solution to this problem. Namely, King Arkathias was the founder of this royal city, and consequently its name must have been *Arkathiokerta.

Remarkably, it is likely that the city was briefly renamed Epiphaneia during the Seleucid period (see chapter 3.2.1.). This must have necessarily involved the introduction of Greek political and cultural institutions (gymnasium and *ephēbeion* are explicitly mentioned), meaning that the local population was in contact with the Greek-Hellenistic culture.¹⁸¹ At the same time, given the lack of further references to the Greek name of this city, its Greek foundation appears to not have had any lasting significance.

Amida, Martyropolis, and Tomisa

Though Amida had been famous for ages as a Roman city strongly fortified by Constantius II in the fourth century, and the Late Antique Dionysios of Tel-Mahre attributed its foundation to Seleukos I Nikator¹⁸² (a fact unknown to Ammianus, who only remarks that it was a very small city, “civitas olim perquam brevis,” before Constantius’ adjustments), its name goes back to the toponym *Amedi*—known from Assyrian sources as the center of the Aramean state Bit-Zamani in the ninth century BCE, and also as the capital of an Assyrian province in the eighth century BCE.¹⁸³

In turn, Martyropolis is a Greek name explaining the deposit of the relics of Persian martyrs brought to the city by Bishop Marutha in ca. 410 CE.¹⁸⁴ Although the city is said to have been “a large village” before Emperor Theodosius II undertook a major enlargement and improvement of the settlement, we do not know its previous name.

Martyropolis was renamed by Emperor Justinian I as Iustinianopolis in the sixth century CE (Malalas 427.5); it is also likely that Amida was likewise renamed by Emperor Constantius II in the early fourth century CE as

¹⁸⁰ Markwart 1930, 34, 37–38.

¹⁸¹ A good example comes from the reign of Antiochos IV Epiphanes in Palaestina – Jerusalem was converted to a Greek polis called Antioch (2 Macc. 4.9–15). It brought about the introduction of Greek political and cultural institutions (gymnasium and *ephēbeion* are explicitly mentioned), but the inhabitants were definitely local Jews. For the latest discussion, see Mittag 2006, 235–247; Aperghis 2011, 67–83; Bernhardt 2016.

¹⁸² G.M. Cohen 2013, 56.

¹⁸³ Unger 1932c, 94–95; Wheeler 2002, 37.

¹⁸⁴ Minorsky 1934, 159.

*Constantinopolis (Amm. 18.9.1: “suoque nomine voluit appellari”), but these names were not maintained.

As in the case of Amida, the name Tomisa goes back to pre-Hellenistic times—it is attested as Tumeiški in the Urartian inscription commemorating the achievements of King Sarduri (likely Sarduri II, 764–735 BCE).¹⁸⁵

2.4.2 *Anthroponyms*

Because we know a number of personal names used by some Sopheneans, we can also undertake an analysis of the onomastic data in order to gain insight into this aspect of Sophene’s cultural landscape.

We will first analyze names of ruling elites in Sophene, which account for the largest number of attested names, and later go on to other, non-royal names, especially names of church leaders known from acts of ecclesiastical councils.

1. *Samos*—Σάμος. This name was well known in the Greek world as the name of the Ionic island called Samos.¹⁸⁶ Although Strabo appears to believe that the island took its name after a native hero (*Geog.* 14.1.15, but see also *Geog.* 10.2.17), his own description suggests that there may be a connection between the island’s terrain and its name: σάμος was frequently used to denote a prominence, hill, or mountain.¹⁸⁷
2. *Arsames*—Ἀρσάμης. This is a common Iranian name, attested especially in Achaemenid times. It goes back to the Old Iranian *rša-ama, which translate as “mit der Kraft eines Mannes/Helden.”¹⁸⁸
3. *Xerxes*: Ξέρξης. King Xerxes (Polybios 8.23). Xerxes is of course an Iranian name *par excellence* (going back to the Old Iranian Xšayārša, meaning “über Helden herrschend”),¹⁸⁹ which was particularly popular with Achaemenid rulers (Xerxes I, 486–465 BC; and Xerxes II, 424/423 BCE).¹⁹⁰
4. *Zariadres*: Ζαριάδρης or Ζαρίαδρις. King Zariadres (*Geog.* 11.14.5). This is an Iranian name, attested as ZRYTR (ZRYHR) in the Aramaic inscriptions from Sevan and Zanguezour/Siwnik,¹⁹¹ and as Zareh in Armenian

185 Serdaroğlu 1977, 65; Barnett 1982, 347. For the inscription, see Beran 1957, 133–145 and Salvini 1972, 107–111.

186 Geisau 1920, 2218–2220.

187 Bromiley 1988, 308.

188 Justi 1895, 29; R. Schmitt 2011b, 95.

189 R. Schmitt 2011b, 268–271.

190 Olbrycht 2010a, 969–970.

191 See Perikhanian 1966 and Perikhanian 1971.

- chronicles. Its etymology goes back to the Old Iranian Zari āθra (“with golden fire”).¹⁹²
5. *Mithrobouzanēs*: Μιθροβουζάνης; son and successor of Zariadres (Diod. 31.22; Polyb. 31.16). This is an Iranian name connected with god Mithra, it means “Erlösung durch Mithra habend.”¹⁹³
 6. *Arkathias*: Ἀρχαθίας (numismatic evidence) is clearly an Iranian name, though no explanation of its etymology has been put forward so far.¹⁹⁴
 7. *Arsakes*: Ἀρσάκης; an Iranian name which is derived from the Old Iranian *r̥šaka, which itself is a shortened affectionate form of *r̥ša(n), which means “Mann, Held.”¹⁹⁵
 8. *Artanes*: Ἀρτάνης; King Artanes (*Geog.* 11.14.15). This is an Iranian name, its etymology goes back to the Old Iranian *Rta-namah, which translates as “dem Rta Verehrung darbringend.”¹⁹⁶
 9. *Tigranes*: Τυγράνης; King Tigranes, son of Tigranes II, king of Armenia, also known as Tigranes the Younger in contrast to his father. The name goes back to the Old Iranian *Tigrāna.¹⁹⁷
 10. *Sohaemus*: Σόαιμος; King Sohaemus of Emesa and Sophene (*Tac. Ann.* 13.7). The name is frequent among rulers of Emesa, it is related to the Semitic (Arabic) root—*suhaym* (“little dagger”).¹⁹⁸

Local Leaders of *Transtigritanae regiones*

11. *Varaz*: the prince of Cop’k’ Šahuni, known from the description of the consecration of Yusik I, grandson of St. Gregory the Illuminator (ca. 341 CE) in BP 3.12. This name is not only of Iranian origin, but also has a clear Zoroastrian connotation—it translates as “wild boar,” which was one of the divine epithets attributed to *Verethragna*.¹⁹⁹
12. *Zareh*: the prince of Cop’k’, recalled in BP 3.12 as attending the consecration of Yusik I, grandson of St. Gregory the Illuminator (ca. 341 CE). This name is an Armenian version of the aforementioned Greek name Zariadres, and goes back to the Old Iranian *Zari āθra.

192 Boyce 1955, 465–467; Perikhanian 1966, 19–21; Garsoïan 1989, 432.

193 Justi 1895, 209.

194 Justi 1895, 26. The form Ἀρχαθίου appears in the Aphrodisias inscriptions, but Chaniotis 2013 transliterates the name as *Arkadios*.

195 R. Schmitt 2011b, 94.

196 R. Schmitt 2011b, 105.

197 Garsoïan 1989, 414.

198 Brown 2001, 323.

199 Garsoïan 1989, 422.

13. *Vatarš*: the prince of Anzitene (Anjit), mentioned in BP 3.12 on the occasion of the consecration of Yusik I, grandson of St. Gregory the Illuminator (ca. 341 CE). This is an Armenian version of the Iranian name attested in the Parthian version of the *Res Gestae Divi Saporis* as *wlgšy*.²⁰⁰
14. *Gnit*: the prince of in Asthianene (Hašteank'), recalled in BP 3.12 in the context of the consecration of Yusik I, grandson of St. Gregory the Illuminator (ca. 341 AD). This name is not attested otherwise;²⁰¹ consequently, its origin cannot be ascertained.
15. *Noy*: the prince of the other Cop'k' appears in BP 4.4 as attending the consecration of Nerses (ca. 353–373 CE) for the patriarch of Armenia.²⁰² Noy is an Armenian version of the biblical name Nōaḥ (נֹחַ).²⁰³
16. *Daniel*: the prince of Cop'k' is mentioned in BP 4.4 on the occasion of the consecration of Nerses (ca. 353–373 CE) for the patriarch of Armenia.²⁰⁴ This name undoubtedly goes back to the Hebrew name Daniel (דָּנִיֵּאל) meaning "God is my judge."²⁰⁵
17. *Nerseh* from Sophene (Cop'k' Šahēi), known from BP 3.9 where the pro-Persian revolt of Arzanene is reported (between 330 and 338 CE, probably 335 CE). Nerseh is undoubtedly an Iranian name, its attestation in the Avesta suggests the meaning "of manly speech," "divine messenger."²⁰⁶
18. *Dat* from Asthianene (Hašteank'), recalled by BP 3.9 in the context of the pro-Persian revolt of Arzanene (between 330 and 338 CE, probably 335 CE). The name is probably related with the Iranian Dād (Pahlavi) or dāta (Avesta) meaning "given," "created."²⁰⁷
19. *Mar*, the prince of Great Cop'k', mentioned by BP 3.9 in the context of the pro-Persian revolt of Arzanene (between 330 and 338 CE, probably 335 CE). The etymology of this name is not clear; it can be either of Iranian (*Māda- meaning a *Mede*) or, more likely, Syriac (Mār: *my lord*) origin.²⁰⁸
20. *Salamut*: the prince of Anzitene (Anjit), mentioned in BP 4.50 in the context of the Persian takeover of much of the *Transtigritanae regiones*. This name is not referenced outside of Armenian sources (BP 4.50 and

200 Garsoïan 1989, 420; Huyse 1999b, 152; Gignoux, C. Jullien, F. Jullien 2009, 136 (no. 423a).

201 Garsoïan 1989, 374.

202 Garsoïan 1989, 111.

203 Garsoïan 1989, 396.

204 Garsoïan 1989, 111.

205 Garsoïan 1989, 367.

206 Garsoïan 1989, 394.

207 Garsoïan 1989, 368.

208 R. Schmitt 1996, 692.

MX 3.15);²⁰⁹ consequently, its origin is not clear, although it has been suggested to be of Iranian origins.²¹⁰

21. *Gaddana*, the satrap of Sophanene known to us from *Cod. Theod.* 12.13.6.²¹¹ This name is Aramaic or Syriac in origin. It is based on the theophoric element *gaddā*, which simply means *fortune* but can also denote the deity *Gad* (an Oriental equivalent of Tyche).²¹² A strictly religious interpretation of this name is theoretically possible on the linguistic level (as a conscious reference to the deity Tyche/Gad), but it is extremely unlikely in historical terms. Such a person would not have been allowed to hold a high office in Christian Byzantium. Therefore, it is most appropriate to interpret this name as a testimony of the survival of (a rather) secular (in nature) belief in good and (bad) turns of fortune.
22. *Theodoros*: Θεόδωρος, the satrap of Sophanene mentioned by Prokopios in *Aed.* 3.2.6.9. This is a Greek theophoric name meaning “God-given,” “God’s gift.” This name appears before the emergence of Christianity, but since the first century CE has become very popular with Christians regardless of their social position.²¹³

Other Names

23. *Qardannaea Diane*: This is the only name in our onomasticon that belongs to an individual of low rank. The provenance of the name *Qardannaea* is unclear; perhaps one could suggest a Semitic origin. In turn, *Diane* is a Greek name, also popular in its Latin form as *Diana*. Its adoption by *Qardannaea*, in addition to what appears to be her native name, clearly shows some amount of Romanization.²¹⁴

Ecclesiastical Leaders

The following names of the church leaders appearing in the Christian documents as holders of ecclesiastical offices in the *regiones Transstigritanae* can be quoted:

²⁰⁹ Garsoïan 1989, 405.

²¹⁰ Justi 1895, 280.

²¹¹ Mommsen 1962, 731; Pharr 1952, 382.

²¹² Tubach 2011, 464.

²¹³ Llewelyn 1998, 7.

²¹⁴ Likewise MacMullen 1963 on the Romanization of Anatolia on the basis of Roman names attested in Amaseia.

1. Maras: Μάρας: Bishop Maras of Amida, who signed the answer of the bishops of Mesopotamia to the Letter of Emperor Leo I (ACO II.5 p. 41–42).²¹⁵ Perhaps an etymological connection with Syriac Mār (*my lord*) or, less likely, Iranian *Māda- (meaning a *Mede*) could be suggested.
2. Asterios: Ἀστέριος: Bishop Asterios of Amida, who attended the Council of Ephesos in 431 CE (ACO I.1.5 §13); this name means a star, starry or the ruler of stars (or *shinny* like a star); its background is typically Greek.²¹⁶ It is attested (also in the form Asterion) in the Greek mythology (borne of a river god, son of Oceanus and Tethys; as well as by the first king of Crete and his son Minotaur).²¹⁷
3. Simeon: Συμεών: Bishop Simeon of Amida, who took part in the Second Council of Ephesos in 449 CE (e.g. ACO II.3.1, §39) and was represented in the Council of Chalcedon in 451 CE (e.g. ACO II.1.1, §30).²¹⁸ The name is typically Northwest Semitic; it goes back to the Biblical figure שמעון.
4. Petros: Πέτρος: presbyter Petros who signed the acts of the Council of Chalcedon in 451 CE on behalf of Bishop Simeon of Amida (e.g. ACO II.1.2, §29, §395).²¹⁹ Petros is a Greek name, it is derived from the word πέτρος meaning a “stone”, “rock”; in the ecclesiastical context, however, it has a strong Biblical undertone as the name borne by Jesus’ main disciple, ܡܬܝܬܐ in Aramaic.²²⁰
5. Marutha: The name of the Bishop of Martyropolis, referred to at the Synod of Seleucia-Ctesiphon (410 CE),²²¹ is Syriac, as it is related to the word “mār,” perhaps meaning “lordship” or “Mann des Fastens.”²²²
6. Zebenos: Ζέβενος: Bishop Zebennos of Martyropolis, who attended the Council of Chalcedon in 451 CE (ACO II.1.1, §134).²²³ The provenance of this name is not clear, although it has been suggested that the name “sounds more Aramaic than Greek,” and is “perhaps related to the verb zaban ‘to sell.’”²²⁴

²¹⁵ Schwartz, Straub 1936 (2.5), 41–42. See also Garsoïan 1998, 260, n. 102.

²¹⁶ LSJ 261; Berettas 2009, 30.

²¹⁷ Hard 2004, 103, 228, 337–339.

²¹⁸ Schwartz, Straub 1933 (2.1.1), 56.

²¹⁹ Schwartz, Straub 1933 (2.1.2), 142 [338] and 153 [349].

²²⁰ See Ilan 2002, 303.

²²¹ Chabot 1902, 253–275. For more sources on the life of this famous bishop, see Marcus 1932 and Brock 2011.

²²² Marcus 1932, 56, n. 37.

²²³ Schwartz, Straub 1933 (2.1.1.), 59.

²²⁴ A.S. Jacobs 2003, 44, n. 50.

7. Noe: Νῶε: Bishop Noe of Kephas, who took part in the Council of Chalcedon in 451 CE (ACO II.1.1, §139);²²⁵ this name is again a Northwest Semitic name referring to the Biblical patriarch Noah.²²⁶
8. *Maras* / Μάρας: Bishop Maras of Anzitene who attended the Council of Chalcedon in 451 CE (ACO II.2.2, §148);²²⁷ see above no. 1.
9. Eusebios: Εὐσέβιος: Bishop Eusebios of Ingilene, who took part in the Council of Chalcedon in 451 CE (ACO II.1.2, §396).²²⁸ Although Eusebios is a common Greek name, widespread before the advent of Christianity, it has a religious connotation, as it is coined after the Greek word εὐσέβεια; consequently, it was often used in a Christian context.²²⁹
10. Kaioumas: Καίουμας: bishop of, probably, Sophene, who attended the Council of Chalcedon in 451 CE (ACO II.2.2, §113).²³⁰ This name is badly distorted, other readings include *Gaiumas* and *Caiuma*.²³¹ The provenance of this name is unclear.
11. *Maronios*: bishop of unidentified see, who attended the Council of Chalcedon in 451 CE (ACO II.3.2 p. 173 [432] §1)²³² and signed the answer of the eparchy of Mesopotamia to the Letter of Emperor Leo I (ACO II.1.2, p. 153 [349] §15);²³³ the text is badly corrupted: Μαρωνουπόλεως which has been interpreted as either a toponym (of some unidentified city of Sophene) or a composite term meaning “Maronios of ...[?] polis”.²³⁴ The provenance of this name is unclear.
12. Valaras (Oualarsekos): bishop of unidentified see, who took part in the Council of Chalcedon in 451 CE and signed the answer of the eparchy of Mesopotamia to the Letter of Emperor Leo I (ACO II.3.2 p. 173 [432], 1–2; ACO II.1.2 p. 153 [349] 16);²³⁵ like in the case of Maronios, the text is badly corrupted, Οὐαλαρσεκουπόλεως, which has been interpreted

225 Schwartz, Straub 1933 (2.1.1.), 59.

226 Garsoïan 1989, 396.

227 Schwartz, Straub 1936 (2.2.2), 44 [136].

228 Schwartz, Straub 1933 (2.1.2), 153 [349].

229 LSJ 731–732.

230 Schwartz, Straub 1936 (2.2.2), 69 [161].

231 See Garsoïan 1988, 275, n. 104.

232 Schwartz, Straub 1936 (2.3.2), 173 [432].

233 Schwartz, Straub 1932 (2.1.2), 153 [439].

234 See Adontz, Garsoïan 1970, 390–391, n. 22; Honigmann 1925, 82, Honigmann 1942–43, 60 (§467), 76; Schwartz, Straub 1982, 315; Markwart 1930, 546–554, esp. 551–554, Garsoïan 1988, 275–276, nn. 105–106.

235 Schwartz, Straub 1936 (2.3.2), 173 [432] and Schwartz, Straub 1933, 153 [349]. See also Schwartz, Straub 1982 (4.3.2), 493 s.n. Valaras.

- as either a toponym (the royal city of Ingilene/Angeltun – Angl²³⁶) or a composite term meaning “Valaras [or Oualarsekos] of .. [?] polis”.²³⁷ Given the fact that the name’s reconstruction is uncertain, its provenance cannot be determined with certainty. The closest parallel appears to be the Armenian name Vałarš, which itself goes back to the Iranian name attested in the Parthian version of the *Res Gestae Divi Saporis* as *wlgšy*.²³⁸
13. *Zoras*, bishop of unidentified see, who signed the answer of the eparchy of Mesopotamia to the Letter of Emperor Leo I (ACO II.5 §24);²³⁹ due to the fact that the document knows of two bishops named Maras and that the Chalcedon acts reveal only one bishop named Maras, it has been suggested that Zoras of the *Letter to Leo* and of the Chalcedon Acts are the same person.²⁴⁰ The provenance of this name is unclear.
 14. *Abra(ha)mīus* / Ἀβρ(α)μίος: bishop of unidentified see, who signed the answer of the eparchy of Mesopotamia to the Letter of Emperor Leo I (ACO II.5, §23, §24).²⁴¹ This name is Northwest Semitic and typically Biblical, it goes back to the name of the Biblical patriarch Abraham.²⁴²
 15. *Cassias* / Κασσίσας: Bishop Cassias/Kassisas of Balabitenē, who took part in the synod of Constantinople in 536 CE (ACO III §26).²⁴³ The provenance of this name is unclear.

236 This is probably the source of the toponym Valarakoupolis on Eremyan’s and Hewsen’s maps of Armenia. See Hewsen 2001, 330.

237 See Markwart 1930, 546–554, esp. 551–554; Adontz, Garsoïan 1970, 390–391, n. 22; Honigmann 1925, 83; Honigmann 1942–43, 60 (§469), 76; Schwartz, Straub, 1982, 493, s.n. Valaras; Garsoïan 1988, 275–276, n. 106.

238 Garsoïan 1989, 420; Huyse 1999b, 152; Gignoux, C. Jullien, F.Jullien 2009, 136 (no. 423a). Other possible names are Riticius/Turuhius (thus written in the Letter to Leo I) or Sērikios/Tiricius (Chalcedon); in this case, the name is very distorted, and may in fact refer to two different figures (ACO II.5, p. 42). See Garsoïan 1988, 277, n. 113; Schwartz, Straub 1982, 416, s.n. Riticius and 429, s.n. Sericius.

239 Schwartz, Straub 1936 (2.5), 42.

240 See Adontz, Garsoïan 1970, 390, n. 22; Honigmann 1925, 82, n. 1; by contrast, Schwartz, Straub 1982, 508, s.n. Zoras distinguished between the two. Likewise Garsoïan 1988, 277.

241 Schwartz, Straub 1936 (2.5), 41–42.

242 Ilan 2002, 59–60.

243 Schwartz, Straub 1940 (III), 28. See also Schwartz, Straub 1982 (4.3.2), 87, s.n. Cassisas 2. See Adontz, Garsoïan 1970, 390–391, n. 22; Honigmann 1925, 82, Honigmann 1942–43, 60 (§467), 76; Schwartz, Straub 1982, 315; Markwart 1930, 546–554, esp. 551–554; Garsoïan 1988, 275–276, nn. 105–106.

16. *Cyriacus* / Κυριακός: Bishop Cyriacus/Kyriakos of Sophene, who participated in the synod in Constantinople in 536 CE (ACO III, §25;§82;§67).²⁴⁴ This name is clearly inspired by the New Testament tradition: the Greek κύριος, meaning a lord, was used in the LXX for the divine *Tetragrammaton*, in the NT it means Lord, God, or refers to Jesus, thus the names in question mean “of the Lord,” “belonging to the Lord.”²⁴⁵
17. *Cyriacus* / Κυριακός: Bishop Cyriacus/Kyriakos of Amida, who part in the Second Council of Constantinople in 553 CE (e.g. ACO IV.1.§40).²⁴⁶ The name is attested in the Latin form, its provenance is identical to the aforementioned Κυριακός.
18. *Cyrion*: Bishop Cyrion of Dadimon, who attended the Second Council of Constantinople in 553 CE (e.g. ACO IV.1.§131).²⁴⁷ This name has the same background as Κυριακός.
19. *Theodorus*: Bishop Theodorus of Ingilene, who took part in the Second Council of Constantinople in 553 CE (e.g. ACO IV.1.§135);²⁴⁸ like Eusebios, this name goes back to a common Greek name with a religious connotation (meaning “God’s gift”), and was also popular as a Christian name.²⁴⁹
20. Ἐλίας: Bishop Elias of Dadimon participating in the synod in Constantinople in 692 CE (*Mansi* XI, col. 992).²⁵⁰ This name is typically Northwest Semitic; it goes back to the famous Biblical prophet Elias.²⁵¹
21. Ἰωάννης: John, Bishop of Ephesos (ca. 507–588 CE).²⁵² In his work on montanism, Epiphanius of Salamis remarks that John came from Ingilene in Mesopotamia (Epiph. *Haer.* 60.1.2).²⁵³ The name is most likely inspired by the tradition of the New Testament (John the Baptist or John the Apostle).

²⁴⁴ Schwartz, Straub 1940, 28, 118, and 185. See also Schwartz, Straub 1982 (4.3.2), 102 s.n. Cyriacus. Κυριακός (18).

²⁴⁵ Freedman, Myers 2000, 822.

²⁴⁶ Schwartz, Straub 1971 (4.1.), 4. See also Schwartz, Straub 1982 (4.3.2), 101 s.n. Cyriacus. Κυριακός (6).

²⁴⁷ Schwartz, Straub 1971 (4.1.), 7. See also Schwartz, Straub 1982 (4.3.2), 117 s.n. Cyrion (1).

²⁴⁸ Schwartz, Straub 1971 (4.1.), 7. See also Schwartz, Straub 1982 (4.3.2), 459 s.n. Theodorus (41).

²⁴⁹ Llewelyn 1998, 7.

²⁵⁰ Mansi 1759 (vol. XI), col. 992; Garsoïan 1998, 260, n. 105.

²⁵¹ Ilan 2002, 63.

²⁵² J.J. van Ginkel 1995, 12–37.

²⁵³ J.J. van Ginkel 1995, 12–37. I am indebted to Dr. K.-G. Wesseling for this remark (22.10.2015).

2.4.3 *Summary*

As far as the toponyms relating to the larger territory of Sophene are concerned, the main feature of the onomastic data is the large amount of local continuity present; all the names of the regions/countries and several names of settlements go back to pre-Hellenistic times. At the same time, evidence of both Iranian and Roman onomastic strata is apparent, and can clearly be explained by the history of the region which, over the course of a few centuries, moved from the Parthian-Sasanian sphere of influence to the Roman.

When it comes to the personal names, we can clearly classify two formal groups within our onomastic data. The first group includes royal names and the names of the ruling elite (22, including three uncertain names: Mar, Sałamut, Gnit'). It should be stressed that by a large amount, most of the names in this group are of Iranian provenance: 13 (and even 14 if Sałamut proves to be Iranian). Other backgrounds are minimally represented: two Semitic (Aramaic/Syriac) names, one Greek, and two Northwest Semitic/Biblical. In chronological terms, analysis also confirms the predominance of Iranian names. The names of the kings of Sophene (attested between the third century BCE and first century CE) were mostly Iranian—8 out of 10. When it comes to names of the local satraps beginning in the 4th century CE, five names are undoubtedly Iranian, one Greek, one Syriac, and two Northwest Semitic/Biblical. Thus, it is evident that in cultural and political terms, the ruling elites of the Sophene region were oriented towards the Iranian world.

In the case of the names of the ecclesiastical leaders, the origin of many of these names is uncertain, but two general conclusions are evident. First, most names are Greek-Biblical, which strongly reflects the widespread customs from the newly-Christianized regions of the Roman world to choose personal names of well-known Biblical figures. However, it is important to note that in the small remaining group, the number of Greek names is notable while virtually no Armenian names are to be found. This may in turn suggest that the Christianity of this region tended to be oriented more towards the Greco-Roman culture than the Armenian world.

2.5 Archaeological Sites

There are two main sources of our knowledge on the archaeological landscape in Sophene: first, on site examination (archaeological prospection) by modern (and medieval) travelers to the region, second, archaeological excavations instigated in the 20th century by dam construction projects in southeastern Turkey (the Keban Project, the Lower Euphrates Project, Algaze's survey, the Ilisu Salvage Project, see Figures 4–7).

2.5.1 *Haraba*

The Keban excavation of Haraba²⁵⁴ (meaning a *Ruin*, this site is part of a cluster of seven villages known collectively as *Arşimşat* among the locals²⁵⁵) in fact only concerned the citadel, located on a steep hill (46.86 m high) and surrounded by the Murat River to its north and south (see Figures 4 and 16).²⁵⁶ Therefore, the excavation work did not include the adjacent city, which was likely located to the southeast of the citadel.²⁵⁷ This location may be suggested on the basis of information given by researchers who inspected the area before the Keban excavations.²⁵⁸ What is more, fragments of walls discovered in trench x most likely did not belong to the citadel but can be identified as part of the city walls.²⁵⁹

The survey was limited in time and scale. It lasted three campaigns (1969, 1970, and 1973) and included six sounding trenches that revealed mainly partial remains of walls and towers along the southern, western, and eastern sides of the site.²⁶⁰

The excavation results show that the walls founded on the original rock were Urartian, while the uppermost remains of walls were medieval (the Artukid period, 12th century or early 13th century CE).²⁶¹ The excavators also suggested that the medieval walls were founded upon Roman predecessors. At least in one case the remains were identified as Hellenistic: the survey in trench C (southern course of the citadel wall) brought to light the remains of a rectangular tower built out of large blocks fitted without mortar.²⁶²

254 For the excavation reports, see Ögün 1971, 43–46; Ögün 1972, 77–78; and Ögün 1979, 29–32. A very important evaluation of these reports is offered by Sinclair 1989, 112–116, who is essentially followed here.

255 Sinclair 1989, 112.

256 Sinclair 1989, 112.

257 It appears that the excavators (see Ögün 1972, 77) sometimes blurred the distinction between the citadel and the city as they spoke interchangeably about “the fortress of Şimşat” (correctly) and its “city walls” (in lieu of “citadel walls” or “fortress walls”). For this problem, see Sinclair 1989, 113 and 116.

258 Huntington 1900, 149; Le Strange 1905, 116–117.

259 Sinclair 1989, 115.

260 Sinclair 1989, 112–113.

261 Sinclair 1989, 112–116. See that Sinclair 1989, 112–116 (who is followed here) speaks of Artukid artifacts (and consequently dates them to the 12th or early 13th centuries CE), while the excavators (see Ögün 1971, 43–46; Ögün 1972, 77–78; Ögün 1979, 29–32) describe the same artefacts as Seljuk (which would imply the first half of the 12th century CE).

262 Ögün 1971, 45; Sinclair 1989, 115. What is more, two other structures in trenches A and D were identified by the excavators as Hellenistic: a large mud-brick construction with two columns in front in trench A (see Ögün 1972, 77) and three “building layers belonging to Hellenistic, Roman and later periods ... intertwined one within the other in a layer 1.50

The excavations also revealed considerable amounts of pottery from various periods: Neo-Hittite (10th–8th centuries BCE), Urartian, Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine, and Artukid (12th century–early 13th century CE).²⁶³ To conclude, a general idea of continuity of military settlement in the citadel could be suggested.²⁶⁴

The finds from the Hellenistic, Roman, and Byzantine periods mainly include pottery, glass and terracotta unguentaria, terracotta pots, lamps and plates, and Byzantine crosses.²⁶⁵ The most extensive ceramic record categorized as late Hellenistic or early Roman predominantly features cream-colored ware slipped on its interior and exterior surfaces with a lustrous red glaze-like material, and clay ware with grooved interiors and red slipped surfaces.²⁶⁶ However, more remarkable pieces of pottery including the fourth-century-BCE (or early-Hellenistic) Attic glazed black pots and Phrygian type vases are also on record.²⁶⁷

The evidence brought forward by the Keban excavation of Haraba has rightly been called “slight and superficial.”²⁶⁸ Nevertheless, it still allows us to suggest a few conclusions.²⁶⁹ First, the site at Haraba (certainly the citadel and most likely its adjacent city) was a significant settlement from Urartian until medieval times.²⁷⁰ Secondly, the site was of some military importance.²⁷¹ Thirdly, it was definitely occupied as a military stronghold in the Hellenistic and Roman periods.²⁷² Given these facts, it appears that the identification of Haraba with ancient Arsamosata, otherwise formulated on the basis of linguistic and historical premises (local continuity of nomenclature, approximate location inferred from literary sources), can be well reinforced by the archaeological data on the ground.²⁷³

meters thick” discovered in trench D (see Ögün 1972, 78). However, no such references can be found in Sinclair 1989, 113–115 who therefore seems to limit clear-cut attestations of Hellenistic architecture in Haraba to trench C.

263 Ögün 1971, 43–46; Ögün 1972, 77–78; Ögün 1979, 29–32.

264 Sinclair 1989, 112.

265 Ögün 1971, 44, 46; Ögün 1972, 77–78; Ögün 1979, 29–32.

266 Ögün 1979, 30.

267 Ögün 1971, 44, 46; Ögün 1972, 77–78; Ögün 1979, 29–32.

268 Howard-Johnston 1983, 248.

269 See Marciak 2014b, 30.

270 Likewise Howard-Johnston 1983, 247; Sinclair 1989, 112.

271 Likewise Ögün 1971, 46.

272 Likewise Ögün 1971, 46.

273 Likewise Ögün 1971, 46.

2.5.2 *Eğil*

Eğil has never been excavated and consequently our entire knowledge about the probable site of ancient Arkathiokerta comes from on-site examinations (see Figures 17–19).²⁷⁴

The site of the citadel is located on a steep and rocky prominence above one of Tigris' gorges (see Figures 17–18). To the north the prominence is protected by steep cliffs carved by the Tigris, while to the south it is limited by a valley that runs parallel to the Tigris.²⁷⁵ The adjacent city lay to the southeast of the citadel, on the slopes leading down from the citadel's low south cliffs to the bed of the river.²⁷⁶

The citadel features considerable remains of walls that run along most of the cliff-top confines; a small preserved portion of wall below the citadel's southeastern corner apparently belonged to the city.²⁷⁷ Most of the citadel wall appears to be Kurdish; however, older layers can also be identified (Inalid or Artukid, Hellenistic). Hellenistic masonry (characterized by large blocks laid without mortar in alternate courses of headers and stretchers and by impressive jointing and beveling of front edges) appears both in stretches of original Hellenistic masonry surmounted by Turkish rebuilding and as reused material (in large quantities).²⁷⁸

Interestingly, a staircase (tunnel with steps) was located on top of the citadel and led from the citadel down to the Tigris.²⁷⁹ Nowadays, the entrance and the lower steps of the tunnel are still visible.²⁸⁰ This tunnel is suggested to be a Byzantine creation with the aim of strengthening the city's defensive capabilities.²⁸¹

A number of rock-cut freestanding monuments can be seen on the Tigris' banks in Eğil's vicinity (see Figure 19). To the southeast of the citadel are several freestanding rock-cut tombs resembling in their shape towers with conical roofs. Two are located on the southeastern slope descending from the citadel to the southern valley.²⁸² Also in this area is a small Assyrian relief on the cliff

274 See Taylor 1865, 36–37; Sinclair 1989, 196–200; Comfort 2009, 288.

275 Taylor 1865, 36; Sinclair 1996.

276 Sinclair 1989, 196. Historical landmarks in the old town (wall, mosque, *hamam*, and church) date to post-ancient times and consequently are of no interest here. See Sinclair 1989, 199–200.

277 Sinclair 1989, 198.

278 Sinclair 1989, 198.

279 Sinclair 1989, 198–199; Comfort 2009, 288.

280 Sinclair 1989, 198–199; Comfort 2009, 288.

281 Comfort 2009, 288.

282 Sinclair 1989, 198–199.

face (depicting a bearded king carrying an axe and wearing a sword) and a now-illegible cuneiform inscription.²⁸³ Three others are located along the Tigris cliff on the citadel's northeastern side: two have the form of a simple cylinder roofed by a cone, the third (located more to the west) additionally features a bulky rectangular base; each tower-tomb has a rectangular chamber.²⁸⁴ Above the tower tombs are many rock-hewn caves cut out of the Tigris cliff; similar caves can also be found on the other side of the Tigris.²⁸⁵

To sum up, the archaeological evidence from Eğil is slim. However, making the best of the available data, a few brief conclusions can be drawn. Eğil had a very strategic position for three reasons. First, it was located on the Tigris; second, it lay on or near the route from Tomisa to Amida; and third, it had a highly defensible character. What is more, material traces suggest a very long record of successive settlements (Assyrian, Hellenistic, and Roman-Byzantine). Thus, Eğil must be considered to have been a very important site in this area for centuries, and consequently a very good candidate for the main city of Ingilene. Finally, the existence of eye-catching tombs in Eğil fits very well the Armenian tradition (*Epic Histories* 4.24) placing Armenian royal tombs in Angl, and consequently makes the identification of Eğil as the site of ancient Arkathiokerta very likely.

2.5.3 *Aşvan Kale*

The site of Aşvan Kale was located on the south bank of the Murat River, about 14 km (as the crow flies) east from its confluence with the Euphrates and 40 km by road northwest of the city of Elazığ.²⁸⁶ Today it is under the waters of Keban Lake (see Figure 4).

The excavators distinguished medieval (three phases: I–III), Roman, and Hellenistic (two phases I–II) occupation at the site.²⁸⁷ The research was mainly focused on analyzing uncovered remains of architecture,²⁸⁸ with only some

283 See Wäfler 1976; Sinclair 1989, 197–198.

284 Sinclair 1989, 199.

285 Taylor 1865, 36; Sinclair 1989, 199. Their sepulchral use was confirmed in the 19th century by Taylor 1865, 36. In turn, Sinclair 1989, 199 reports the opinion of local informants that “some human skulls in the tombs were, it is said, taken away by European visitors about the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries.”

286 Mitchell 1980, 1.

287 There was also some evidence of pre-Hellenistic occupation (late second or early first millennium BCE), but these levels have not been explored by the excavators. See Mitchell 1980, 27.

288 Mitchell 1980, 35–63.

attention given to other finds including pottery, skeletal, botanical and geological material, stone, metal, glass, clay and glass.²⁸⁹

The Hellenistic occupation at Aşvan Kale comprised two phases. As for the Hellenistic phase no. I (dated to the second century BCE), the evidence is scarce: the excavations brought to light partial remains of two adjacent structures (joined by a narrow connecting wall) oriented approximately NE/SW.²⁹⁰ The walls were more than a meter thick and built of reddish pisé (or mud brick) and set on stone foundations (which in turn were bound together by dark grey clay).²⁹¹ Their tentative size was at least 6.25 m × 11.50 m (the eastern structure) and 6.50 m × 7.50 m (the western structure), which suggests space larger than for ordinary domestic purposes.²⁹² Most pottery of the Hellenistic phase I is of low quality, made of straw-tempered buff or red clay.²⁹³

The most extensive piece of evidence from Aşvan Kale concerns Hellenistic phase II. The excavations revealed a building complex located on the top of the mound.²⁹⁴ The complex was oriented approximately NW/SE and built of pisé or mud brick on stone foundations like the building in the Hellenistic phase I.²⁹⁵ It included a two-story range of five rectangular rooms (three with ovens or stoves) which apparently served as the main living quarters, and a single story annex of two rectangular rooms which was planned to make an L-shape beside an open courtyard. The annex apparently served either for storage or, less likely, to house animals.²⁹⁶

An abundance of everyday objects was found in the Hellenistic period layer II including pottery, bronze objects (e.g. scale pans, the hinges of a wooden chest), and coins (a hoard of 48 silver drachms [see below], three silver coins of Ariobarzanes I [dated to 71–66 BCE], and a bronze coin probably of Antiochos XI Philadelphos [who reigned 95–92 BCE]).²⁹⁷ As far as the Hellenistic pottery is concerned, except a dozen sherds, it is of local origin, even though not from Aşvan Kale itself.²⁹⁸ The extant record includes both fine and coarse pottery, the most common types are vessels (mainly plates and bowls) made of a hard fine clay with little intrusive grit, their color range from buff to dark red (depending on firing conditions) usually with a pinkish

289 Mitchell 1980, 65–72.

290 Mitchell 1980, 35.

291 Mitchell 1980, 36.

292 Mitchell 1980, 36.

293 Mitchell 1980, 36.

294 Mitchell 1980, 37.

295 Mitchell 1980, 37.

296 Mitchell 1998, 92–93. See also Mitchell 1980, 38–40.

297 Mitchell 1998, 92–93.

298 Mitchell 1980, 69.

or orange tinge. They are decorated with a very thin slip of usually red or orange color.²⁹⁹ Additionally, only a handful of *Eastern Sigillata* and three glazed sherds are reported.³⁰⁰

The Hellenistic period layer II bears many signs of burning, which indicates violent destruction. This event has been dated due to the discovery of a hoard of 48 Kappadokian silver drachms contained in a small jar and hidden in the wall of one of the remotest rooms of the complex: one coin was struck on behalf of Ariarathes IX Eusebes of Kappadokia (101–87 BCE), the rest was issued by Ariobarzanes I Philorhomaioi of Kappadokia (96–63 BCE) between his 26th and 31st regnal years, that is from 71 to 66 BCE.³⁰¹ It follows that the hiding of the hoard and consequently the violent destruction of the buildings by fire occurred in 66 BCE or soon thereafter.

To summarize, given the character of the architectural remains, the dominant position of the site and a relative abundance of finds, the building complex has been interpreted by the excavators as the focus of a village settlement and the living quarters of a well-off local family.³⁰²

The Roman period occupation on top of Aşvan Kale brought about the rebuilding of the destroyed building complex in the first century BCE.³⁰³ However, it took on a very different shape (see Figure 20). A Roman building had the form of a roofed rectangular hall with two internal (probably wooden) columns standing on two stone column bases set in the floor and a circum-ambulatory corridor (1.20 m and 1.90 m wide between the outer and the inner wall).³⁰⁴ The structure was built of mud brick on stone foundations and was roughly rectangular in shape. The central room measured approximately 7 m x 8 m, and its floor was of reddish earth laid on a light grey clay make up. The floor was kept in excellent condition. The building was drained by a system of two pipes (one inside the building below the floor, another outside the outer wall).³⁰⁵ The courtyard outside the building was paved with bluefish river pebbles and other stones. Immediately opposite the entrance to the building the pebbles were laid to form a circular pattern (2.75 m) where an usually large deposit of smashed animal bones was found.³⁰⁶

299 Mitchell 1980, 70–71.

300 Mitchell 1980, 71–72.

301 Mitchell 1980, 10–11.

302 Mitchell 1998, 93.

303 Mitchell 1980, 45.

304 Mitchell 1980, 41–45; Mitchell 1998, 93.

305 Mitchell 1980, 41–43.

306 Mitchell 1980, 43; Mitchell 1998, 93.

It appears that the building would be ill designed to serve for domestic or military use.³⁰⁷ What is more, the circular arrangement of river pebbles set in a wide paved area (with a large deposit of smashed animal bones inside it) likely indicates the place of sacrifice.³⁰⁸ To summarize, the building was suggested to be a cultic place erected between the mid-first century BCE and the third century CE, most likely in the first century CE due to the character of the pottery finds.³⁰⁹ Given the presence of river pebbles, unusual in a terrestrial context, it has been speculated that the deity worshipped in the first-century Aşvan Kale was Anāhitā as a goddess of water.³¹⁰

Indeed, Anāhitā was frequently seen as the personification of water and worshipped near springs and watercourses.³¹¹ What is more, her cult is otherwise attested in Sophene (Plut. *Luc.* 24.4–8), as well as in the region (Sophene's neighbor, Akilisene was famous for Anāhitā's cult in Classical sources, see Cass. Dio 36.48.1, 36.53.5; Pliny the Elder *HN* 5.83).³¹² Yet it must be stressed that, however likely, this identification (on its own, but see the case of Taşkun Kale) is tentative due to the lack of more distinctive archaeological data.

The discovery of a hoard of Kappadokian drachms led the excavators to suggest a link between archaeological data at Aşvan Kale and historical records concerning the Third Mithridatic War (74 or 73–63 BCE³¹³). Namely, as we learn from literary sources (Cass. Dio 36.53 in the first place, but also Plutarch, *Pomp.* 33 and Appian, *Mith.* 105), in the autumn of 66 BCE the king of Armenia Tigranes II (known as Tigranes the Great) finally surrendered to the Roman general Pompey near his capital at Artaxata. According to Pompey's conditions, Tigranes II had to give up most of conquered lands, and Sophene (as well as Gordyene) were given to his son (who meanwhile went over to the Roman side), also named Tigranes (nicknamed Tigranes the Younger). However, an argument between Pompey and Tigranes the Younger arose over the control of treasures in fortresses in Sophene (Cass. Dio 36.53). Although Sophene was to belong to Tigranes the Younger, the treasures were to be handed over to Tigranes II so that he could pay off the contribution to Pompey. Those in control of the fortresses in Sophene, however, would not obey without their new master's orders. Yet when Pompey ordered Tigranes the Younger to personally

307 Mitchell 1980, 45; McNicoll 1983, 48.

308 Mitchell 1980, 45; Mitchell 1998, 93.

309 Mitchell 1980, 45; Mitchell 1998, 93.

310 Mitchell 1980, 46; Mitchell 1998, 93.

311 Boyce, Chaumont, Bier 2011.

312 Dillemann 1962, 117; de Jong 1997, 276–277; Boyce, Chaumont, Bier 2011.

313 For the dating, see McGing 1984, 12–18.

influence those in charge of the fortresses, they still refused to follow his command, claiming that he issued it under compulsion and not of his own free will. As a result, Pompey put Tigranes the Younger in chains. In turn, Tigranes II managed to get hold of the treasures and to pay the contribution to Pompey:³¹⁴

... and inasmuch as this was where the treasures were, the young man began a dispute about them, and not gaining his point, since Pompey had no other source from which to obtain the sums agreed upon, he became angry and planned to escape. Pompey, being informed of this in season, kept the youth in honorable confinement and sent to those who were guarding the money, bidding them give it all to his father. But they would not obey, stating that it was necessary for the young man, to whom the country was now held to belong, to give them this command. Then Pompey sent him to the forts. He, finding them all locked up, came near and reluctantly ordered that they be opened. When the keepers obeyed no more than before, claiming that he issued the command not of his own free will, but under compulsion, Pompey was vexed and put Tigranes in chains. Thus the old king secured the treasures, and Pompey passed the winter in the land of 'Anaïtis and near the river Cyrnus, after making three divisions of his army. From Tigranes he received plenty of everything and far more money than had been agreed upon. It was for this reason particularly that he shortly afterwards enrolled the king among the friends and allies of the Roman people and brought his son to Rome under guard.

According to the excavators, Mitchell and McNicoll, the fortresses in Sophene containing royal treasures had to be taken by force by the Romans.³¹⁵ Despite the fact that Aşvan Kale was technically not a fortress, its destruction can still be well understood in the context of the Romans' action, as an act of pillaging being one of the "less happy side-effects" of Roman campaigns.³¹⁶

2.5.4 *Taşkun Kale*

Before the flooding by the Keban Lake waters (see Figure 4), Taşkun Kale was located about 4 km south-southeast of the village of Aşvan on the west side of a small wadi shaped by the Kuru River (a perennial stream flowing north-south before entering the Murat valley).³¹⁷

³¹⁴ Cary 1924, 91.

³¹⁵ Mitchell 1980, 12.

³¹⁶ McNicoll 1973, 186.

³¹⁷ McNicoll 1983, 1–2.

The excavations were focused on two areas known as the fortress area and the church area.³¹⁸ The first one was located on a flat-topped mound (about 50 m north-south and 35 m east-west). The excavations revealed well-preserved remains of a medieval fortress.³¹⁹ It is only in the church area where important findings of interest to this study took place. The excavations in the church area revealed architectural remains of two buildings: one dated to the Late Hellenistic period (first century BCE), the other to early Byzantine times (fourth-sixth centuries CE).³²⁰ Other evidence (pottery, coins or other finds) was virtually non-existent.³²¹

The first building was rectangular or square in ground plan (facing east), with paired walls on the north and south sides (at least 15 m long) forming a circumambulatory corridor round a central chamber (see Figure 21).³²² The masonry of the building (limestone ashlar) was executed with great care and skill. It included several skillful elements such as a *voussoir*, a frieze, column bases, and a pilaster capital.³²³ Outside the building and close to its threshold, a pit cut into virgin soil was located near the excavators. The pit contained a horse's skull and two hooves.³²⁴ According to the excavators, the building was of a religious character, as suggested by its plan (unfit for domestic or military purposes), the style of masonry, and the unusual find of the pit. Mainly on the basis of the find of horse sacrificial remains, it has been speculated that Shamash or Anāhitā were worshipped at Taşkun Kale.³²⁵

The most remarkable feature of this cultic site is indeed the presence of horse sacrifice. This sacrificial practice is well attested in the ancient Near East. For instance, in the Persian festival organized by Cyrus, horses were sacrificed to the sun (*Cyr.* 8.3.12,24.); according to Herodotus, the Scythians did likewise (*Herod. Hist.* 1.216). Horses were also sacrificed to the sun by villagers in Armenia (*Xenophon, Anab.* 4.5.35). In all these examples there is indeed a clear connection between the sacrifice of horses and the solar cult. This is perhaps the reason to suggest Shamash, a well-known Mesopotamian sun god as the deity worshipped at Taşkun Kale. At the same time, the examples mentioned above come from an Iranian context, and the role of the sun god was played by

318 McNicoll 1983, 3–5.

319 McNicoll 1983, 7–21.

320 McNicoll 1983, 23–27.

321 McNicoll 1983, 23–27.

322 McNicoll 1983, 23–24. See also Sinclair 1989, 98–99; Mitchell 1998, 93.

323 Mitchell 1998, 93.

324 McNicoll 1983, 19. See also Sinclair 1989, 98–99; Mitchell 1998, 93.

325 McNicoll 1983, 24. See also Mitchell 1998, 93.

Mithra in Iranian traditions.³²⁶ For instance, it was during the *Mithrakana* (the festival in honor of Mithra) that 20 000 young horses delivered by the satrap of Armenia was offered (*Geog.* 11.14.9).

What is more, other examples from an Iranian background show that horses could be sacrificed in Iranian traditions without an explicit reference to the sun god (Mithra). By way of example, the magi sought good omens by sacrificing white horses at the River Strymon in Thrace (*Herod. Hist.* 7.113). Similarly, sacred white horses were used by Cyrus to attempt the crossing of the Gyndes (*Herod. Hist.* 1.189), and Tiridates I sacrificed a horse as a propitiation to the river god before crossing the Euphrates (*Tac. Ann.* 6.37.2).³²⁷ These examples rather point to Anāhitā, a river goddess, than to Mithra, the sun god. Accordingly, in *Yašt* 5.21 (*Aban Yašt*), horses (stallions) are explicitly listed as a sacrifice for Anāhitā.³²⁸

The Iranian interpretation of the cultic place at Taşkun Kale is also strengthened by the striking find of a pit within the sacred confines. Namely, the use of a pit in a sacrificial context is attested in Zoroastrian traditions: the pit was dug in order to collect the waste products of the sacrifice, including the blood.³²⁹

To conclude, it appears that the presence of water resources in the vicinity of the sacred place and the use of a pit in a sacrificial context speak in favor of Anāhitā as the deity worshipped at Taşkun Kale, even though it is a tentative identification.

The late Hellenistic building was superseded by another building interpreted as a Christian basilica which was erected between the fourth and sixth centuries CE and remained in use until the early second millennia CE (perhaps the 11th century CE).³³⁰ The plan (see Figure 22) featured a rectangular structure (comprising a wide nave and narrow aisles separated from the nave by piers) with a semicircular apse (where three Syriac inscriptions from about the 10th–13th centuries CE were found).³³¹ This arrangement presents an interesting mixture of stylistic features. A tripartite basilica with an inscribed

326 However, see also Briant 2002, 252, who cautions “on the one hand, ... in the Achaemenid period, Mithra was closely related to the Sun and, on the other hand, that there was never either formal or exclusive assimilation.”

327 See other references in Tuplin 2010, 144, n. 171.

328 Maspero, Sayce, McClure 1900, 592; Tuplin 2010, 144, n. 171. In contrast, see de Jong 2002, 143 and n. 64 who, having quoted this passage, claims: “even though there does not seem to be direct evidence for horse sacrifice.”

329 See de Jong 2002, 137–138.

330 McNicoll 1983, 26–31. See also Sinclair 1989, 98–99 and Mitchell 1998, 93.

331 McNicoll 1983, 26–31; Sinclair 1989, 98–99; Mitchell 1998, 93.

(in Syriac) apse is indeed typical of Syrian basilicas. At the same time, two elements are characteristic of early Armenian churches: the width ratio of aisles to nave, the former being much narrower than the latter, and the use of piers in lieu of internal colonnades.³³²

2.5.5 *Tomisa*

The ancient crossing at Tomisa (*Geog.* 14.2.29 and *Polyb.* 34.13) is widely identified with the vicinity of the modern Kömürhan Bridge, which crosses the Euphrates between two Turkish provinces, Malatya and Elazığ (see Figures 8 and 23). This identification is corroborated by the find of a Urartian inscription at Habibuşağı Kale (also referred to as Yazılıkaya or İzöğlü [Kuşsarayı], now flooded after the dam's construction).³³³ The site is a steep, conical, rocky hill measuring about 700 m, located about 500 m west of the village of Habibuşağı.³³⁴ On the southwestern side of the hill, facing the Euphrates (at an elevation of about 670 m) was a rock-cut Urartian inscription engraved in a shallow rectangular panel measuring some 130 cm x 180 cm.³³⁵ The inscription commemorates the achievements of King Sarduri (most likely Sarduri II, 764–735 BCE), and, it recalls the crossing of the Euphrates by his troops in front of the city of Tumeiški.³³⁶ This inscription testifies to the use of the nearby crossing of the Euphrates as late as the early first millennium BCE. What is more, the proximity of the Urartian and Greek names allows us to place Sophene's famous crossing near modern Habibuşağı Kale.

The survey of the Lower Euphrates Project brought to light remains of rubble stone foundations and wall beds on the Habibuşağı hill, which likely indicates the existence of a fortress dated to the Iron Age.³³⁷ In turn, pottery sherds collected from the surface belonged both to the Roman period (characterized by a red coating on the inside and outside) and to the Byzantine period (of light buff color with grooves).³³⁸ To conclude, Ü. Serdaroğlu suggests the existence of a limited settlement next to the fortress on top of the

332 McNicoll 1983, 48–49.

333 Eckhardt 1910a, 82; Magie 1950, 789 (n. 17), 1099 (n. 16); Honigmann 1954, 37; Frankfort 1963, 181; Sinclair 1989, 41, 43.

334 Özdoğan 1977, 82.

335 Özdoğan 1977, 82; Serdaroğlu 1977, 65.

336 Serdaroğlu 1977, 65; Barnett 1982, 347. For the inscription, see Beran 1957, 133–145 and Salvini 1972, 107–111.

337 Serdaroğlu 1977, 65.

338 This information is given by Serdaroğlu 1977, 65, but not by Özdoğan 1977, 83 who informs only about the Bronze and Iron Age pottery,

hill (covering an area of about 70 m x 80 m), with its latest phase including the Late Roman period or the Early Byzantine period.³³⁹

In contrast, T. Sinclair suggested that the Hellenistic-Roman fortress of Tomisa could not be located at Habibuşağı Kale, since, “on the evidence the pottery and other material,” Habibuşağı was not in use after the Urartian period.³⁴⁰ In Sinclair’s view, another hill northeast of Habibuşağı, known as Tomisa Kale, must be identified as the site of the fort at Tomisa in Sophene. This hill has a dominant position overlooking the Euphrates, ideally situated for watching both the Euphrates and the nearby pass to the Elazığ plain, and on top of the hill are very fragmentary remains of a medieval castle.³⁴¹

Another site on the eastern side of the Tigris in the vicinity of Habibuşağı, Kömürhan does not feature any ancient remains.³⁴² In turn, on the western side of the Tigris across Habibuşağı, Roman materials (masonry and pottery) have been identified at two sites, Köşkerbaba Hüyük and Pirot. The remains at Köşkerbaba Hüyük include ruins of a Roman fortified enclosure and a watchtower,³⁴³ while at Pirot only Roman pottery in large quantities (Roman *terra sigillata*) has been uncovered.³⁴⁴ As a result, according to Sinclair, the site of the actual crossing of the Euphrates in the Hellenistic and Roman times was likely at Köşkerbaba Hüyük.³⁴⁵

All in all, although the location of the fort of Tomisa remains a matter of conjecture, there can be no doubt that, in general, it was located in the vicinity of Habibuşağı where the modern bridge (known as Kömürhan Köprüsü) over the Tauros is located.

2.5.6 *Amida*

Amida is built on a plateau on the west bank of the Tigris, which overlooks the river’s broad valley and lies close to the major bend of the course of the Tigris to the east.³⁴⁶ As such, Amida is located at the crossroads of important routes: from Tomisa to Tigranokerta (and further via the Bitlis pass to Armenia), and from Tomisa to Nisibis.³⁴⁷ This location gives the city a highly strategic position.

339 Serdaroğlu 1977, 55: “the Early Christian period.”

340 In this regard, Sinclair 1989, 41 appears to follow Özdoğan 1977, 83, but not Serdaroğlu 1977, 65.

341 Sinclair 1989, 41, 43.

342 Sinclair 1989, 48.

343 Sinclair 1989, 40, 46–47.

344 Serdaroğlu 1977, 65.

345 Sinclair 1989, 40.

346 Sinclair 1989, 164; Sellwood 2011.

347 Sinclair 1989, 166; Comfort 2009, 283.

Amida is explicitly mentioned for the first time in ancient sources in the Roman period in the context of Roman-Sasanian wars from the fourth century CE on.³⁴⁸ Of course, it has been speculated that Roman Amida, occupying a strategic geographic position, must have been founded on the place of an earlier ancient settlement. Indeed, the first Roman reference to Amida (by Ammianus 18.9.1) states that it was a very small city (“civitas olim perquam brevis”) before Constantius II’s construction. In turn, Dionysios of Tel-Maḥre (fl. in the ninth century CE) ascribed its foundation to Seleukos I Nikator.³⁴⁹ Furthermore, it has been pointed to the toponym *Amedi* known from Assyrian sources as the capital of Aramean state Bit-Zamani in the ninth century BCE and later as the center of an Assyrian province in the eighth century BCE.³⁵⁰ Likewise, it has been speculated that Amida may be hidden under Ptolemy’s *Ammaia*.³⁵¹ However, the fact remains that Amida has never been extensively investigated archaeologically. Its material culture is known to us only through surface examination of material remains. The current shape of the old city is Byzantine-medieval.

The Roman history of Amida is known to us mainly through the perspective of Roman and Sasanian wars and sieges. It was founded by Emperor Constantius II in 349 CE, and it must have profited from the exodus of the population from Nisibis after its loss by the Romans to Persia in 363 CE.³⁵² The struggle for control over Amida played an important role in the Roman-Sasanian wars. The city changed hands several times from the fourth to the seventh centuries CE: 359 CE (to Persia), 363 CE (regained by Rome), 503 CE (captured by Persia), 504 CE (back to Rome), 602 CE (again to Persia), 628 CE (regained by Rome, but lost to the Arabs in 639 CE).³⁵³

It is evident that Roman Amida played the role of an important fortress in the region. It is therefore not surprising that the primary ancient remains in modern Diyarbakır are impressive fortifications faced in characteristic local dark basalt (see Figures 25–28). The remains include a long city wall (5.5 km long) stretching 1.5 km from east to west, and 1.1 km from north to south, possibly the longest medieval city-wall with large towers of various shapes (most of which are U-shaped, but some rectangular and polygonal too); another

348 See Gabriel 1940, 85–92; Sinclair 1989, 164–195; Comfort 2009, 283–284; Sellwood 2011, Hamarneh 2012, 1069.

349 G.M. Cohen 2013, 56.

350 Unger 1932c, 94–95; Wheeler 2002, 37.

351 Baumgartner 1894, 1833. By contrast, Hewsens 2002, 128, n. 51 and Wheeler 2002, 93; Gabriel 1940, 87 reject this identification.

352 Sinclair 1989, 166; Comfort 2009, 200.

353 Wheeler 2002, 128; Hamarneh 2012, 1069.

outer, lower wall (*proteichisma*) on all sides except the east one overlooking the Tigris; and a citadel to the northeast (occupying an area of some eight hectares) with its own wall.³⁵⁴ The chronology of the fortifications is, however, problematic because there is no stratigraphic evidence from Amida, and the dating must therefore be based on historical and epigraphic data.³⁵⁵ Literary sources indicate at least two major architectural activities: by Constantius II in 349 CE (Ammianus 18.9.1) and by Justinian I in ca. 527–565 CE (Prokopios, *Aed.*, 2.3.27). As for epigraphic evidence, there are a number of inscriptions from the city walls: a Latin inscription commemorating the rebuilding of the walls under the emperors Valentinian I, Valens, and Gratian (thus dated to 367–375 CE); numerous brief and undated Byzantine inscriptions (both on reused material and found *in situ*); and finally Arabic inscriptions dated from the 9th to the 12th centuries CE.³⁵⁶ This evidence is interpreted in two different ways: either stressing that the surviving remains are mainly Byzantine but also including later medieval repairs;³⁵⁷ or emphasizing that the core of today's fortifications is in fact medieval, though based on earlier layers.³⁵⁸

It should also be noted that despite its main role as a fortress, Amida must have had a high cultural profile. An amphitheater is known to have existed in Amida in 504 CE (Joshua the Stylite 76); likewise, public baths, which made such a strong impression on the Persian king Kavādh I (who captured the city in 503 CE) that after his visit to Amida he decided to introduce baths in all cities of the Sasanian kingdom (Joshua the Stylite 75);³⁵⁹ what is more, some parts of the remains of the church building known nowadays as “the Virgin” can be dated to the sixth century CE.³⁶⁰

2.5.7 *Martyropolis*

Martyropolis is situated on sloping ground at the foot of the Hazro hills and on the banks of the Farqin River, a tributary of the Batman River (some 16 km from their confluence).³⁶¹

The city of Martyropolis represents a similar case to Amida. It appears in historical sources only in the Roman period, it has never been excavated, and consequently our knowledge on this site is mainly based on surface examination.

354 Gabriel 1940, 95–157; Sinclair 1989, 167–176; Pollard 2000, 289; Comfort 2009, 283.

355 Pollard 2000, 289.

356 Gabriel 1940, 133–144; Pollard 2000, 289.

357 Gabriel 1940, 175–182; Oates 1968, 103–106; Comfort 2009, 238.

358 Sinclair 1989, 167–168; Sellwood 2011.

359 Luther 1997, 180.

360 Sinclair 1989, 184–185; Comfort 2009, 238.

361 Sinclair 1989, 287; Comfort 2009, 301–302.

The founding story of Martyropolis was transmitted by Arabic historians, Yāḩūt and Ẓazwīnī, who rely on a Syriac-Jacobite source (via Ibn al-Azrak).³⁶² According to this tradition, Bishop Marutha brought relics of martyrs from Persia in ca. 410 CE and buried them in a newly built church in “a large village”; in turn, Emperor Theodosius II followed suit by undertaking a major enlargement and embellishment of this settlement.³⁶³ At the same time, Prokopios informs us (*Aed.* 3.2.10–14) that Martyropolis was not strongly fortified and that this situation changed only in the time of Emperor Justinian I in the sixth century CE (who may have changed the name of the city to Iustinianopolis).³⁶⁴ Accordingly, the defense of Martyropolis played a more important role in Byzantine-Sasanian wars in the sixth century CE (especially from 584 to 591 CE);³⁶⁵ in 712 CE the Arabs conquered it.³⁶⁶ The city enjoyed the height of its importance from the 10th to the 12th centuries CE under the Marwanids and Artukids.³⁶⁷

Today’s Martyropolis, known as Silvan in the Diyarbakır province, still features the remains of impressive walls with towers (see Figures 29–30).³⁶⁸ Much destruction took place from the end of the 19th century. Several towers and some parts of the walls have been turned into private houses,³⁶⁹ and at least one major ancient monument documented by G. Bell in 1911—the ancient cathedral built probably in the fifth century—has entirely disappeared by now.³⁷⁰

The extant remains of the city walls (built of very large cut blocks) appear to be largely ancient (especially on the south and east sides):³⁷¹ “their basic shape, the design of their towers and the sitting of the gates reflect the Justinianic reconstruction of the city, in spite of the numerous repairs which have had to be made in later centuries”³⁷² (known to have taken place from the 10th to the 12th centuries CE in particular).³⁷³ An important inscription was found at the northwestern corner of the city wall (on one of the towers

362 Minorsky 1934, 159. The text and the translation can be found in Markwart 1916, 125–135.

363 Minorsky 1934, 159.

364 It has recently been suggested that some achievements ascribed by Prokopios to Justinian I in fact belonged to his predecessor, Anastasius. See Comfort 2009, 42–44, 209.

365 Greatrex, Lieu 2002, 167–175; Comfort 2009, 302.

366 Sinclair 1989, 287.

367 Sinclair 1989, 287.

368 For a detailed description of Martyropolis’ city walls, see Gabriel 1940, 213–220.

369 Sinclair 1989, 289; Comfort 2009, 301–302.

370 Comfort 2009, 301–302.

371 Sinclair 1989, 289; Comfort 2009, 301–302.

372 Whitby 1984, 179.

373 Sinclair 1989, 287–289.

of the gate),³⁷⁴ which was formerly thought to confirm the identification of Martyropolis/Silvan as the site of ancient Tigranokerta.³⁷⁵

The inscription is preserved only fragmentarily, but we can infer from the text that it commemorates the recovery of royal dominions (the place name Νέχρα is explicitly mentioned, most likely denoting Martyropolis, since the city is known as *Np'rkert* in Armenian, *Mayparqet* in Syriac and as *Mayyāfāriqīn* in Arabic) by a king who, because of the lack of the beginning of the narrative, remains anonymous. The inscription can be dated to the fifth or sixth century CE on paleographic grounds, and to the sixth century CE on linguistic grounds (because of its grammar and vocabulary).³⁷⁶ On the basis of the content of the lacunose inscription, it is now widely assumed that the narrative best fits the events of 588–591 CE: the Sasanian king Khusro II fled from Persia to Byzantium because of an internal coup in his kingdom, but, thanks to the help of the Byzantine Emperor Maurice, regained his throne. In return, the Romans received from Khusro II the region of Martyropolis (lost in 588 CE in a pro-Persian rebellion), the district of Dara, and Arzanene (to mention the most important territorial sessions).³⁷⁷

2.6 Communication Routes in the Upper Tigris Region

Several scholars have undertaken in-depth inquiries into ancient routes in the upper Tigris region based on their own fieldwork.³⁷⁸ The most recent research was made by A. Comfort, whose work was based on both the study of historical accounts and archaeological fieldwork in the region.³⁷⁹ Although Comfort's research focused on the Late-Roman/Early-Byzantine, it also, at least partly, referred to earlier times. In this context, it should be stressed that although, in general, a route important at one period of history did not necessarily have

374 For the (not entirely clear) location of the find of the inscription in the city walls, see Lehmann-Haupt 1908, 499; Mango 1985, 95, n. 24; Pleket, Stroud 1985; Sinclair 1994–95, 230, n. 60.

375 This is a famous but now definitely outdated interpretation by Lehmann-Haupt. See Lehmann-Haupt 1908, 497–520; Lehmann-Haupt 1910, 410–419, 498–515; Lehmann-Haupt 1936, 1002–1003. Lehmann-Haupt was followed by many scholars, among others: von Moltke 1893, 302; Belck 1899, 263–275; Christensen 1944, 239; Carcopino 1950, 581, n. 3; Manandyan 1965, 62; Adontz, Garsoïan 1970, 376, n. 10; n. 5; Magie 1950, 1214, n. 36; Hewsens 1984, 360; Biffi 2002, 165.

376 Mango 1985, 101–104. Likewise Chaumont 1982, 104.

377 Chaumont 1982, 104–105, n. 94; Mango 1985, 91–104; Sinclair 1994–95, 230–232.

378 Poidebard 1934; Dillemann 1962; Sinclair 1989; Sinclair 1996–1997; Comfort 2009.

379 Comfort 2009. See also a short summary in Comfort 2014.

to be important in another, the existence of routes in the upper Tigris region is heavily dependent on the natural environment, and consequently there is every chance of continuity especially in the use of key elements of long-distance communication in the region such as mountain passes and fords. At the same time, the Roman network of routes is nowadays the most easily traceable, since it left tangible marks on the landscape in the form of stone bridges, pavements, and fortresses (see Figure 31).

One of the most important routes in the *regiones Transtigritanae* (labeled as “Melitene to Nisibis”³⁸⁰) started at the Tomisa crossing (“Ad Aras” on the PT),³⁸¹ and led through the Ergani pass in the Tauros to the vicinity of Amida (“Ad Tygrem” on the PT),³⁸² from where it continued to Nisibis. From Nisibis, the route followed the plain below the escarpment of the Tūr ‘Abdīn to the Tigris crossings in Gordyene³⁸³ (especially “Ad flumen Tigrim” on the PT³⁸⁴). Next, the route led via Adiabene (Herodotus’ two crossings of the rivers bearing the same name, i.e., most likely, the Zabs) to Babylonia.³⁸⁵

For this route one paved section of the Roman road was recently located—it starts north of modern Diyarbakır and stretches for some 20 km north towards Eğil and across a Roman bridge (Karaköprü) on the Devegeçidi River.³⁸⁶

It is also possible that another route (“Palu to Amida”) led to Amida from the north, probably connecting Palu in Balabitenne across the Tauros with Eğil in Ingilene.³⁸⁷ Traces of the road paving were reported in 1907 (but without proper documentation),³⁸⁸ and the existence of the Dibene Bridge (recently destroyed by the Dicle Dam) also indicates such a route.³⁸⁹

Another very important route in the *regiones Transtigritanae* has been labeled as the route “to Armenia from the south-west.”³⁹⁰ It is known to the PT as the route from “ad Tigem to Isumbo” (the identification of latter is uncertain).³⁹¹ Having crossed the Tigris near Amida, the route must have followed the north bank of the Tigris to the confluence of the Tigris with the Batman River where it moved upstream the Batman River. It led through the bridge at Harap on the

380 Comfort 2009, 106.

381 Dillemann 1962, 117; Talbert 2000, 1269; Howard-Johnston 2006, 277; Comfort 2009, 113.

382 See Talbert 2000, 1269.

383 Comfort 2009, 111.

384 See Talbert 2000, 1269.

385 Comfort 2009, 108.

386 Comfort 2009, 55–56, 114.

387 Comfort 2009, 58–59, 115.

388 Sykes 1915, 364.

389 Sinclair 1989, 268–269; Comfort 2009, 58–60, 115.

390 Comfort 2009, 116.

391 See Talbert 2000, 1275.

Batman River to Tigranokerta (Arzan), then via a valley branching northeast from the Garzan River to the Bitlis valley and the Bitlis pass in the Tauros.³⁹²

This route is well traceable on the ground through the existence of a number of Late-Roman/Early-Byzantine bridges: first, the Ongöz Bridge at Diyarbakır (2.3 km south of the old city);³⁹³ second, the Harap Bridge on the Batman River;³⁹⁴ third, the remains of a possibly ancient predecessor of the modern İkiköprü Bridge (as indicated by ancient stonework beneath).³⁹⁵ What is more, another remains of a bridge indicative of the Tigris crossing from south to north joining the route to the Bitlis pass (or, alternatively, to Martyropolis) from the Mesopotamian plain is the Köprüköy Bridge 6 km southwest of the junction of the Batman River with the Tigris.³⁹⁶

The route “to Armenia from the south-west” was also joined at the Harap Bridge by another route coming down via Martyropolis from the Birkleyin pass.³⁹⁷ The route from the Birkleyin pass is well attested by the Antağ (Gömeý Perdi) Bridge, on a branch of the Kulp River (a tributary of the Batman River),³⁹⁸ as well as by the remains of several Roman fortresses (Illyrisos, Pheison, and Attachas) along the route.

The Bitlis pass was the main gateway to Armenia from Mesopotamia and could be reached from both Arzanene and Gordyene. In the first case, from the Roman fort at Hasankeyf (where it continued the road from Nisibis), the route led eastwards alongside the Tigris (via the junction of the Tigris and the Garzan at Şeyhosel) to the junction of the Tigris with the Bohtan River at Tilli, at which point the route continued northwards.³⁹⁹

Several important locations along this route can be mentioned: the Roman fortress at Hasankeyf (ancient Cephæe),⁴⁰⁰ remains of a paved Roman road east of Hasankeyf along the mountain ridge that follows the north bank of the

392 Comfort 2009, 106–113.

393 Comfort 2009, 52, 60–61.

394 Comfort 2009, 64–67.

395 Comfort 2009, 124.

396 Comfort 2009, 61–62.

397 Comfort 2009, 64–67.

398 Comfort 2009, 67–68.

399 Comfort 2009, 27, 69, 116–125. Likewise Lightfoot 1986, 519.

400 Comfort 2009, 289–290.

Tigris,⁴⁰¹ the Roman bridge at Şeyhosel on the Garzan river,⁴⁰² and the Roman fortress at Çattepe (also known locally as Tilli or Til).⁴⁰³

As far as the approach from Gordyene is concerned, the route went along the Tigris and Bohtan rivers via Eski Finik up the Kazrik gorge towards the present-day city of Şırnak, and further northwest via modern Eskieruh and Siirt, to the Bitlis Pass.⁴⁰⁴ This route continued the road from Adiabene (via Arbela along the eastern bank of the Tigris). At the same time, it could be joined by other routes from the Mesopotamian desert at a number of possible crossings points on the Tigris (north of its confluence with the Great Zab): Nimrud, Faysh Khabur, modern Cizre, and Bezabde.⁴⁰⁵

There are several identifiable ancient remains on this route along the Tigris: a Hellenistic-Roman fortress complex at Eski Finik and Eski Hendek (Bezabde),⁴⁰⁶ the Kazrik area (two fortresses guarding a nearby pass through the Cudi Dağı, two Parthian reliefs,⁴⁰⁷ as well as the nearby remains of the Roman bridge known as Bürüçek Bridge),⁴⁰⁸ another Parthian relief near the confluence of the Tigris and the Inlı rivers,⁴⁰⁹ and a possibly Roman bridge at Kırık (below Siirt on the Bohtan River).⁴¹⁰

2.7 Roman Fortresses and Bridges in the Upper Tigris Region

Literary evidence, including Prokopios of Caesarea (especially *De Aedificiis* 2.4.14⁴¹¹), George of Cyprus (*Descriptio Orbis Romani* 910–965⁴¹²), and *Notitia Dignitatum*,⁴¹³ shows that one of the primary concerns of the Romans in the upper Tigris region was to strengthen the region's military security by

401 Comfort 2009, 27, 69.

402 Algaze, Breuninger, Lightfoot, Rosenberg 1991, 219, fig. 10 (site no. 1 named Şeyh Hosal Köprü); Comfort 2009, 68.

403 Comfort 2009, 27.

404 Comfort 2009, 117.

405 See Dillemann 1962, 147–192 (esp. fig. XVIII); Jankowska 1991, 229–231; Kaegi 2003, 166; Comfort 2009, 79.

406 Algaze 1989, 254.

407 Algaze 1989, 254.

408 Comfort 2009, p. 76.

409 Algaze, Breuninger, Lightfoot, Rosenberg 1991, 190–191.

410 Comfort 2009, 76.

411 Dindorf 1838.

412 Gelzer 1890, 46–48.

413 Seeck 1876.

creating a network of fortified cities (Arsamosata, Arkathiokerta, Amida, and Martyropolis) and fortresses.

This picture is in general corroborated by extant topographical and archaeological evidence. Although many place names recalled in ancient sources remain unidentified, several extant defensive structures in the region have been suggested as the remains (the state of which is usually very fragmentary) of possibly ancient (late Roman and early Byzantine) fortifications (see Figure 31).⁴¹⁴

- Abarne (38°12'52.25"N; 39°18'05"E), located northwest of modern Çermik (which in turn lies some 70 km northwest of Diyarbakır) located on the route to the Euphrates crossing below modern Çungus (some 16 km further to the northwest);
- Amini Kale (38°14'26"N, 40°10'45"E), likely ancient *Inzieton*, approximately 7.5 km east of Eğil, on a rocky plateau at the confluence of the Dibene and the upper Tigris;⁴¹⁵
- Charcha also known as Üçtepe (37°49'32"N; 40°32'03"E), located just south of the Tigris bank close to the routes along the Tigris to Bitlis and from Amida to Nisibis;⁴¹⁶ recent excavations revealed substantial Hellenistic and Roman occupation: two Hellenistic levels dated to between the fourth century BCE and the first century CE, and four Roman levels between the second and fourth centuries CE;⁴¹⁷
- Birkleyin and Dakyanus Kale (38°31'45"N, 40°32'53"E and 38°21'45"N, 40°33'21"E), both north of Silvan, perhaps matching Prokopios' *Illyrisos* and *Pheison*, defending the route across the Tauros from Martyropolis to Kitharizon;⁴¹⁸
- Antağ (38°21'21"N, 40°43'23"E), approximately 35 km northwest of Silvan, likely ancient *Attachas*, also defending approaches to the mountain pass from Martyropolis to Kitharizon;
- Başka Kalesi (38°10'56"N, 41°12'11"E), also known as Akbaş, located on the east bank of the Kulp River, some 15.5 km northeast of Silvan; in this posi-

⁴¹⁴ See Comfort 2009, 208–228, 314–330.

⁴¹⁵ Likewise Sinclair 1989, 269. By contrast, Gabriel 1940, 257; Howard-Johnston 1983, 249 identify it as modern Eğil.

⁴¹⁶ Comfort 2009, 290–291.

⁴¹⁷ Özfırat 2005, 56.

⁴¹⁸ See also Honigsmann 1935, 19; Dillemann 1962, 39 (fig. 111) and 235–236; Sinclair 1989, 272–277.

tion one could easily keep watch on movements from Martyropolis towards Arzanene;

- Semrah Tepe (38°05'14"N, 41°08'54"E), perhaps ancient *Samocharton*, approximately 20 km southeast of Silvan, the site is located about 1 km west of the Batman River (this location does not create great difficulties for its identification as Samocharton; for instance, Tomisa on the east bank of the Euphrates could also belong to Kappadokia);
- Anoshirvan Kale also known as Zercel Kale (38°04'28"N, 41°29'09"E), possibly to be identify with ancient *Aphoumon*, it was located opposite Golamasya on the other side of the Garzan river, and some 15 km upstream from Arzan; as such, it could be used to keep watch on the route from Bitlis to Arzan;
- Rhipalthas and Hasankeyf (37°43'11"N, 41°13'44"E and 37°42'40"N, 41°24'43"E), the latter definitely matching the ancient fort Cephæ, both on the south bank of the Tigris and guarding north-south crossings;
- Kale Bozreşa/Hisarkaya and Savur (and 37°33'00"N, 40°52'49"E), possibly ancient *Ispthrios* and *Tzauras*, respectively, both located south of the Tigris and guarding one of the possible approaches from the Nisibis area towards Amida;
- Kale-i Zerzevan (37°36'25"N; 40°30'08"E), south of the Tigris and on the route from Nisibis to Amida, perhaps matching ancient *Samachi*.

In this group of fortresses, Abarne was located in the territory of Ingilene, Amini Kale could be controlled by both Ingilene and Sophanene; Birkleyin, Dakyanus Kale, and Antağ were definitely Sophanene's northern fortresses guarding the Tauros passes, while Charcha, Kale Bozreşa/Hisarkaya, Savur, and Kale-i-Zerzevan, all four located south of the Tigris, were most likely controlled by Sophanene and served to keep watch on the route from Nisibis to Amida. In turn, Başka Kalesi (Akbaş), Semrah Tepe, Anoshirvan Kale (Zercel Kale), Rhipalthas, and Hasankeyf were all fortresses belonging to Arzanene.

The functioning of a network of cities and fortresses, as well as facilitating trans-local and international trade could not have taken place without securing good communication lines. This apparently led to the creation of a network of Roman bridges. Thanks to A. Comfort's research in the area, it possibly to partially trace a network of Late-Roman/Early-Byzantine bridges in the region (see Figure 31):⁴¹⁹

419 See Comfort 2009. See also Algaze's map in Algaze, Breuninger, Lightfoot, Rosenberg 1991, 219, fig. 10.

- the Ongöz bridge at Diyarbakır (37°53'14"N, 40°13'45"E), 2.3 km south of the old city, dated to the end of the fifth century CE; this bridge served communication lines with areas east of Amida: Martyropolis, Arzan (Tigranokerta), and further on to Armenia (via the Bitlis pass);⁴²⁰
- the Harap bridge (37°59'19"N, 41°09'09"E) is located along the same route—on the Batman (ancient Nymphios) River;⁴²¹
- the ruins of the bridge at Karaköprü (38°04'02"N; 40°08'28"E), on the Devegeçidi River (18 km north of Diyarbakır), are Artukid in its final shape (11th–12th centuries CE), but it must have developed from a Roman predecessor, as there is a clearly traceable Roman road (including stretches of paving) between Amida and Köprüküy;⁴²² this road must have continued north-west to the Tauros passes near Ergani;⁴²³
- another Roman bridge was located (approximately 38°23'09"N, 40°12'19"E, now destroyed by the Dicle Dam) on the Dicle River near Dibene/Döğer (and known as the Dibene Bridge), and likely carried a Roman road (traces of paving were reported by Sykes⁴²⁴) from Amida (through Eğil) to Palu, and so possibly linking Sophene and Ingilene with other Armenian principalities beyond the Tauros (via the Birkleyin pass, 24 km to the east of the Dibene bridge);⁴²⁵
- similarly, the Antağ (Gömeý Perdi) bridge (38°22'06"N, 40°43'38"E), on a branch of the Kulp River (a tributary of the Batman River) carried a road across the Tauros linking Martyropolis with Kitharizon;⁴²⁶
- another bridge (37°48'54"N, 40°57'25"E), recently destroyed, was located on the Tigris at Köprüküy (6 km southwest of the junction of the Batman River with the Tigris) and probably facilitated communication across the Tigris from Martyropolis to Mardin;⁴²⁷
- it is not certain whether the present medieval bridge at Hasankeyf (37°42'50"N, 41°24'40"E) had a Roman predecessor. If this were the case, it would have connected a road from Nisibis and Dara in the south to Arzan (Tigranokerta) and further on to Armenia (the Bitlis pass).⁴²⁸

420 Comfort 2009, 52, 60–61.

421 Comfort 2009, 64–67.

422 Comfort 2009, 22–23, 55, 57.

423 Comfort 2009, 57.

424 Sykes 1915, 364.

425 Comfort 2009, 58–60.

426 Comfort 2009, 67–68.

427 Comfort 2009, 60–61.

428 Comfort 2009, 63–64.

2.8 Summary and Conclusions

The inquiry into Sophene's cultural landscape reveals the existence of quite a number of characteristics which can be tentatively labeled as different cultural elements: local Anatolian, Iranian, Armenian, Greek-Hellenistic, Roman, Syrian-Mesopotamian, and Christian.

The local Anatolian (and pre-Hellenistic) cultural component is first suggested by literary evidence: *Geog.* 11.14.12, who makes the case that the people who inhabited this area were not Armenian in origin, and Plutarch's description of the population of Sophene's positive reaction towards Roman troops (*Luc.* 24.8). In both cases, this element comes to the fore in contrast to any expectation of the existence of Armenian influences in this area. Furthermore, the local Anatolian cultural component is most strongly attested in the toponymic data preserved in later (Greek and Roman) sources. All this evidence suggests that to some extent the settlement in this area in the Hellenistic and Roman periods could be a continuation of pre-Hellenistic populations.

The evidence for the existence of Iranian culture in this area is strong. It concerns Sophene's elites and its religion in particular. This is not surprising if we take into account the fact that we find many examples of the spread of Iranian culture among Sophene's neighbors (in Armenia in particular, but also in the countries located more to the west than Sophene: Kappadokia, Kommagene). In the first case, Sophene's kings and nobility preferred Iranian names for themselves and for their royal cities. They also dressed and expressed their tastes in an Iranian manner (the Boşat relief). Iranian cults were very popular with both Iranian elites (theophoric Iranian names) and the village population (the Taşkun Kale evidence). It was the goddess Anāhitā who first enjoyed great popularity in Sophene (near Tomisa, likely in Taşkun Kale and possibly in Aşvan Kale). Political institutions (satrapies) and social makeup (hereditary and autonomous nobles) were also Iranian in character. It is also possible that some other social customs of Iranian origin (possibly the acceptance of eunuchs; see the Özkönak epitaph) were firmly rooted in Sophene among the lower classes.

Furthermore, much data suggests the Armenian influence in the region, and the perception of Sophene as an integral part of the Armenian world has had a long record in scholarship. Indeed, to some Greek and Roman geographers Sophene appeared to be a distinctive part of Greater Armenia (e.g. *Geog.* 11.12.3–4; *Geogr.* 5.13.13; Pliny the Elder *HN* 6.22). What is more, both Prokopios and the Byzantine administrative sources see this region as a distinctive type of Armenia in administrative, political, cultural, and ethnic terms in the 6th century CE. It should be not surprising that later Armenian chronicles which

write the Pan-Armenian history also tend to see the nobility in this area as part of the Armenian political and religious Commonwealth.

Remarkably, the evidence of Armenian culture in the archaeological record is, however, minimal (some features of the basilica in Taşkun Kale). In this context, one may perhaps argue that the well-attested presence of Iranian culture should be interpreted as “the Iranian derivation characteristic for Arsacid Armenia,”⁴²⁹ i.e., apparently as coming to the region directly from Greater Armenia and only indirectly from Iran. At the same time, one might perhaps speculate to the contrary that such a strong presence of Iranian culture influenced the Greeks and Romans writing about the region and made them perceive the region of Sophene as Armenian in general terms.

Greek-Hellenistic culture was strongly present in Sophene and particularly concerned the economic levels (see the evidence from the Keban sites and Eğil). A considerable amount of everyday objects with this background are attested in the archaeological record, both in cities and in the rural environment (domestic and military architecture, masonry, and ceramics). The coins used in this area were also Hellenistic issues (Kappadokian coins found *in situ* in Aşvan Kale, as well as coins of Sophene rulers). Like almost everywhere else in the Hellenistic Near East, Greek influence brought a fashion for the use of Greek names, language, and script (the Martyropolis inscription), and could also be felt in other aspects of “high culture” (e.g., the amphitheater in Amida). In turn, the Roman cultural influence in this area (following Rome’s political might) made its mark on communication and the military aspects of material culture. This region became densely covered with a network of Roman roads, bridges, and forts.

In particular, southeastern parts of the kingdom of Sophene were geographically exposed to the cultural influences of the Mesopotamian area (Pomp. Mela 1.53; Pliny the Elder, *HN* 5.66; *Laterculus Polemii Silvii* 93), which is known as the origin of the highly distinctive cultures of Edessa, Gordyene, Adiabene, and Hatra, to give only four examples. This part of Sophene had close commercial ties with the Syrian-Khabur area (see the middle Euphrates archive). Despite the testimony of Armenian chronicles (esp. Agat’angelos-Cycle), it seems that Christianity in the territory of Sophene took its origin from Syriac-speaking Christianity and was under its strong influence afterwards (traditions concerning St. Thaddeus and Mashtots’, affiliation of ecclesiastical sees). Christianity replaced Iranian cults in Sophene, which slightly echoes in the repertoire of personal names of Sophene’s elites and is most clearly manifested by the custom (well attested elsewhere, too) of building Christian temples in the place of formerly non-Christian sacred places (Taşkun Kale).

429 Garsoïan 1988, 257, n. 34.

Political History of Sophene

3.1 The Beginnings: Sophene and Kommagene under the Rule of the Orontids?

According to Strabo *Geog.* 11.14.5.,

... Armenia, though a small country in earlier times, was enlarged by Artaxias and Zariadres, who formerly were generals of Antiochos the Great, but later, after his defeat, reigned as kings (one as king of Sophene, Amphisene, Odomantis, and certain other countries, and another as king of the country round Artaxata), and jointly enlarged their kingdoms by cutting off for themselves parts of the surrounding nations....¹

In reading *Geog.* 11.14.5, one can get the impression that for Strabo the political history of the Hellenistic kingdom of Sophene begins only with Zariadres, one of the two generals of Antiochos III, who became independent from the Seleucid monarch and assumed the title of the king of Sophene.² It is evident that Strabo does not know of any predecessor of Zariadres in Sophene and apparently assumes that Sophene was under Seleucid control before.³

However, epigraphic evidence from Kommagene and Armenia, as well as numismatic data from the region (combined with a few enigmatic references in literary sources), may suggest that the history of the Hellenistic kingdom of Sophene is older. The most recent interpretation of this data has been put forward by M. Facella in her study of Kommagene.⁴ Let us briefly summarize the evidence and its interpretation.

1 The translation is that of H.L. Jones 1928, 324–325 with slight modifications of proper names. The main difference is the reading of Amphisene instead of Akisene, following Lasserre 1975, 123 and Radt 2004, 391.

2 The order of rulers mentioned in *Geog.* 11.14.5 (ὁ μὲν ... ὁ δὲ ...) may suggest that it was Artaxias who was the king of Sophene, but other passages in *Geog.* (especially 11.14.15) leave no doubt that Artaxias was the king of Armenia and Zariadres ruled in Sophene.

3 This is also probably meant by Sullivan 1990, 106 who writes that “this kingdom has no reliable known history before the time of the Seleucid Antiochus III (‘the Great’) ...”

4 Facella 2006, esp. 170–205.

The most important epigraphic evidence comes from Mount Nemrud in Kommagene. In addition to numerous statues and reliefs, two rows of inscribed stelae are present on both terraces of the summit and are dedicated to a number of claimed royal ancestors of King Antiochos I of Kommagene (ca. 70–36 BCE), both in his paternal and maternal line.⁵ In view of this data, Antiochos I's genealogy goes back to both the Achaemenid house in his paternal line (including the Persian king Dareios I and his heirs), and the Seleucid house in his maternal side (including Alexander the Great).

Of special importance to our study is Antiochos I's paternal ancestry, which may in fact suggest political affiliations of Kommagene (and Sophene). Namely, Antiochos I's paternal ancestors include the following figures:⁶ Dareios I, [Xerxes I ?], [Artaxerxes I], [Dareios II], [Artaxerxes II], Aroandes I, Aroandes II, [Bar?]danes, unknown ancestor, Samos I, Arsames, unknown ancestor, [Ptolemaios ?], Samos II, and Mithradates I Kallinikos.

The link with the Persian royal house is created with the person of Aroandes,⁷ better known from Greek sources as Orontes (I), the satrap of Armenia, who, according to Xenophon (*Anab.* 2.4.8; 3.4.13) and Plutarch (*Art.* 27.7; see also OGIS 391–392), married Rhodogune, the daughter of the Persian king Artaxerxes II. His several descendants, labeled as the Orontids, ruled in Armenia as satraps first under the Persians and later in the Hellenistic period.⁸ Usually in the Hellenistic period, Armenia probably lay beyond the reach of the Seleucids, and the Orontids were only occasionally compelled to recognize their overlordship.⁹ Several rulers of Persian-Hellenistic Armenia are mentioned in ancient sources. Orontes I is most well-known for his participation in the battle at Kunaxa in 401 BCE on the side of Artaxerxes II (against Cyrus the Younger and the Greek army of “the Ten Thousand”), while Orontes II is most

5 See Dörner 1967; Dörner 1975; Dörner 1981; Dörner 1996; Krkiasharian 1971; Fischer 1972; Messerschmidt 1990; Messerschmidt 2000; B. Jacobs 2000a; B. Jacobs 2000b; Facella 2006, 78–224; Facella 2009; B. Jacobs 2009, 142–145; B. Jacobs 2011.

6 The stelae are preserved in a fragmentary condition, and consequently their interpretation is not straightforward. The objective of this study is not to suggest a new reconstruction. Instead, the present study follows Facella (2006 and 2009), who is in turn indebted to the epigraphic reconstruction of R: F.K. Dörner, which certainly surpassed older reconstructions by Puchstein and Jalabert, Mouterde (OGIS and OGLIS). Other important interpretations are those of Messerschmidt 1990; B. Jacobs 1997; B. Jacobs 2000c; Messerschmidt 2000; and B. Jacobs 2002.

7 B. Jacobs 2000, 300; Messerschmidt 2000, 37; B. Jacobs 2002, 77.

8 The objective of this study is not to dwell on the identification and history of the Orontids. For more details, see Russell 2005.

9 H.H. Schmitt 1964, 37; Garsoïan 1997b, 45.

well-known for partaking in the battle between Alexander the Great and the Persians at Gaugamela in 331 BCE.¹⁰ It was around 261 BCE when another ruler named Orontes (probably III) is called the king for the first time in ancient sources (Diod. 31.19.4–6: Ardoates).¹¹ Lastly, according to *Geog.* 11.14.15, the last member of this dynasty also held the name Orontes (probably Orontes IV who is also attested in the Armavir inscription).

At the same time, the extent of the power of the Orontids is disputed, and the lack of clear indications in sources does not allow more than approximate estimates. According to Herodotus 3.93, in the Persian period, the Armenians lived, together with other peoples, in the 13th satrapy.¹² We can also infer from Xenophon (*Anab.* 4.4.3) that Armenia was in fact divided into two parts, each with its own satrap: Western Armenia and Eastern Armenia, both separated by the Teleboas (the Karasu). The former was governed by Tiribazes, a favorite of the Persian Great King; the latter by Orontes (I) (*Anab.* 4.4.4).¹³ This distinction may also have been behind the presence of two different contingents of the Armenian cavalry led by Mithraustes and Orontes (II) at the battle of Gaugamela in 331 BCE (Arr. *Anab.* 3.8.5 and 11.7; Curt. Ruf. 4.12.10).¹⁴ There exists even less clarity concerning the extent of the Orontids' rule in the Hellenistic period. The co-appearance of the Macedonian general Eumenes in ca. 322 BCE (who was said to be in charge of all Macedonian troops in Armenia, see Plut. *Eum.* 5) and Orontes as the satrap of Armenia in ca. 317 BCE (Diod. 19.23.3) may indicate that the possession of the Orontids was limited to eastern parts of Armenia, while the western parts were more under control of the Seleucids.¹⁵ At the same time, the involvement of Orontes (III) in the struggle between the Seleucids and Ariarathes II in Kappadokia (Diod. 31.19.4–6) in ca. 261 BCE indicates that the extent of the Orontids' power reached as far as the

10 For more details on several royal figures bearing the name Orontid, see B. Jacobs 2009, 142–143 (Facella's review).

11 Messerschmidt 1990, 49; Messerschmidt 2000, 40; B. Jacobs 2002, 77–78;

12 Chaumont 1986.

13 Hewsen 1983, 141–143; Chaumont 1986; B. Jacobs 1994, 67, 175, 183–186; Briant 2002, 622, 741–743. This idea has been objected to by Klinkott 2005, 451–453 who explains Xenophon's distinction as being of purely geographical (and not administrative) character. See also Briant 2002, 741, who writes that: "Xenophon's phraseology leaves open the possibility that there was a single satrapy within which there were several subdistricts (hyparchies)."

14 Chaumont 1986; Briant 2002, 741.

15 Messerschmidt 1990, 48–49.

Euphrates at least by 261 BCE, i.e., it included both Greater Armenia and the territory of Sophene.¹⁶

What is the significance of the Nemrud Dağı inscriptions for the history of Sophene? First of all, if the territory of Kommagene, located west of the Euphrates (seen as the natural frontier of Armenia), was under the rule of the Orontids (as either Seleucid subordinates or independent rulers), the more so must have been Sophene, which lay further east.¹⁷ What is more, a few other specific connections between Kommagene and Sophene have been suggested with regard to the ruler named Arsames.¹⁸

- 1 – Arsames from Mt. Nemrud could match a certain Arsames¹⁹ recalled by Polyainos 4.17: “Antiochos revolted from his brother Seleukos and fled into Mesopotamia, and then, crossing over the Armenian mountains, took refuge with his friend Arsames.”²⁰ Arsames bears the title of a φίλος, a common Hellenistic court title used normally for the king’s closest associates,²¹ and in this case apparently for a subordinate ruler (but not a king yet). The fight between Antiochos Hierax and his brother Seleukos II Kallinikos is dated to ca. 227 BCE.²²
- 2 – Arsames from Mt. Nemrud could be the founder (*ktistes*) of several cities in the region of Kommagene and Sophene: Arsameia on the Nymphaios (direct epigraphic evidence from modern Eski Kahta, inscription A), Arsameia on the Euphrates (modern Gerger, inscription G), and (most importantly to us) Arsamosata in Sophene.²³

16 Toumanoff 1959, 13; Messerschmidt 1990, 49; Messerschmidt 2000, 40; B. Jacobs 2002, 77–78; Chahin 1987, 217.

17 While most scholars indeed see Sophene as part of the satrapy of Armenia in the Persian period, the affiliation of Kommagene in the Persian and Hellenistic period is more complicated. Three options have been suggested: Kilikia, Kappadokia, and Armenia. The last option has in fact been strengthened mainly due to the discoveries on Mt. Nemrud. See Facella 2006.

18 The name Arsames can be safely reconstructed, while the reconstruction of the name Samos has been more complicated. The reading has been suggested as both Arsames and, preferably, Samos. See Facella 2006.

19 The manuscripts provide the form Ἀρσάβης instead of Ἀρσάμης. See Krentz, Wheeler 1994, 430. This change can be explained as the result of a simple copying error.

20 Krentz, Wheeler 1994, 430–431.

21 Burstein 1985, 151; Weber 2009, 58.

22 Beloch 1926, 684–685, n. 1; Schottky 1989, 102, 107; Facella 2006, 174.

23 Facella 2006, 175–177. Likewise Hewsens 1984, 362.

Arsamosata is mentioned by several ancient sources (Polyb. 8.23, Plin. *HN* 6.26; *Geogr.* 5.12.8) and at the earliest by Polybios as the royal city of Xerxes located near the “Fair Plain” between the Euphrates and the Tigris.²⁴ This plain can easily be identified as today’s Kharput Plain (known as “the Golden Plain” in modern times) and the city most likely as modern Haraba (see above). Consequently, Xerxes can be identified as the king (in Polybios’ words βασιλεύς and as τύραννος according to John of Antioch) ruling in the territory of Sophene. What is more, Polybios’ text explains that Antiochos attacked Xerxes on the account of the latter’s lack of loyalty and due to unpaid tribute of Xerxes’ father. The lacunas narrative of Polybios leaves some room for the identification of the Seleucid monarch: some scholars see him as Antiochos IV,²⁵ while others see him as Antiochos III (the Great).²⁶ If Antiochos III is to be preferred, which is more likely, then the episode can be approximately dated to the beginning of his Eastern campaigns, i.e., to around 212 BCE.²⁷ As for Xerxes, he surrendered and was forgiven by Antiochos III who gave him his sister Antiochis as a wife. However, according to John of Antioch (no. 122),²⁸ Xerxes was later poisoned by his wife on the orders of Antiochos III.²⁹

What is more, Strabo’s narrative about the last Orontid, who was removed from his throne by Antiochos III and replaced by Zariadres and Artaxias as new rulers of Sophene and Greater Armenia (*Geog.* 11.14.15), has been cast into new light by 20th-century epigraphic discoveries of ancient inscriptions in the Republic of Armenia, especially near Lake Sevan, in the regions of Zanguezur (Siwnik’), Teghut, and in Armavir.³⁰

Two Aramaic inscriptions were found near Lake Sevan in 1906 and in 1932.³¹ The first comprehensive edition of these inscriptions was published by A. Dupont-Sommer between 1946 and 1948.³² The inscriptions are preserved in a fragmentary condition, but they undoubtedly mention ʾrthšsy as king and son of zrytr.³³ The name ʾrthšsy is clearly an Aramaic form of the Iranian name artaxšaθra, which is also attested in the Greek as Ἀρταξέσσης or Ἀρταξέρξης.³⁴ It

24 The forms of the city name vary a little depending on the author: Polyb. 8.23: Ἀρμόσατα; Pliny the Elder, *HN* 6.26: *Arsamosata*; *Geogr.* 5.12.8: Ἀρσαμόσατα.

25 Babelon 1890, CXCV, Alram 1986, 68, Marciak 2014b, 23.

26 H.H. Schmitt 1964, 37–38; Facella 2006, 184–188.

27 H.H. Schmitt 1964, 37–38.

28 Roberto 2005, 194–195.

29 H.H. Schmitt 1964, 28, Facella 2006, 187.

30 For a short overview, see Khatchadourian 2007, 48–55, esp. fig. 3.1 on p. 49.

31 See Perikhanian 1971.

32 Dupont-Sommer 1946–48.

33 Dupont-Sommer 1946–48, 57–58.

34 Dupont-Sommer 1946–48, 57–58.

also appears that the Greek Ἀρταξίας can be seen as another form of the Iranian artaxšaθra.³⁵ In turn, the Aramaic ZRYTR comes from the Old Iranian Zariāθra (“with golden fire”), and is also known in Greek as Ζαρίαδρις or Ζαριάδρης.³⁶ The inscriptions are attributed to the first half of the second century BC on both historical and epigraphical grounds.³⁷

In turn, the Zanguezour inscription was found in 1964 and was published by A. Perikhanian in 1966.³⁸ Six Aramaic lines, engraved on a stela, mention a king named [ʾ]rthš[sy] as ʾrwnd[kn] and son of zryhr.³⁹ While the term ʾrwnd[kn] has been identified as the title *Eruandid/Orontid* (Iranian *Aurvant-, Greek Ὀρόντης), the Aramaic proper names have been recognized as Aramaic forms of the Iranian names artaxšaθra and zariāθra.⁴⁰ It appears that both zrytr and zryhr are possible spelling variants of the same name.⁴¹ The Zanguezour inscriptions have been considered on epigraphical and linguistic grounds as contemporary to the Sevan inscriptions.⁴²

Another important Aramaic inscription comes from near the village Teghut and was found before 1971. Its edition was published by Perikhanian in 1971.⁴³ The inscription includes the title of the king and the statement concerning the date and the occasion of the inscription: it was erected to commemorate the division of the land in the tenth year of the reign of ʾrtsrkssy mlk ʾrwndkn br zrytry.⁴⁴ The king's name, ʾrtsrkssy, is rendered in Aramaic, but is apparently based on the Greek version of the name, Ἀρταξέρξης.⁴⁵ Again, the king calls himself an Orontid and son of zrytry.⁴⁶ The inscription is attributed to the first half of the second century BCE on historical and epigraphic grounds.⁴⁷

When it comes to the discovery in Armavir, seven Greek inscriptions were found: three in 1911 and four more in 1927.⁴⁸ The first critical edition in a west-

35 Dupont-Sommer 1946–48, 59.

36 Dupont-Sommer 1946–48, 59; Boyce 1955, 465–467; Perikhanian 1966, 19–21; Garsoïan 1989, 432.

37 Dupont-Sommer 1946–48, 59.

38 Perikhanian 1966.

39 Perikhanian 1966, 18.

40 Dupont-Sommer 1946–48, 57–58.

41 Perikhanian 1966, 19–20.

42 Perikhanian 1966, 17–18.

43 Perikhanian 1971, 169.

44 Perikhanian 1971, 170.

45 Perikhanian 1971, 171.

46 Perikhanian 1971, 170.

47 Perikhanian 1971, 169.

48 J. Robert, L. Robert 1952–58, 181; Mahé 1994, 567–586.

ern language was undertaken by J. & L. Robert⁴⁹ (and with regard to inscription no. 2, Ch. Habicht⁵⁰), and recently by J.-P. Mahé.⁵¹ Inscription no. 4 is most relevant to our interests, as it presents the beginning of a letter from the king of the Armadoeiroi (otherwise unknown), named Mithras, to King Ἐβρόντης. The letter expresses conventional greetings and wishes of health for Ἐβρόντης and his offspring, as well as of continuing prosperity in his kingdom.⁵² The inscriptions are dated to approximately 200 BCE on epigraphic grounds.⁵³ Consequently, Ἐβρόντης of the Armavir inscription can easily be identified with Orontes IV known from Strabo as the ruler removed from his throne by Antiochos III.⁵⁴

To summarize, the recent epigraphic testimony from Armenia appears to coincide remarkably with the narrative of *Geog.* 11.14.15 about the last Orontid and the appointment of Artaxias and Zariadres as rulers of Greater Armenia and Sophene by Antiochos III.⁵⁵ It is widely accepted that Artaxias attested in the epigraphic evidence matches Strabo's Artaxias. The new evidence revealed his Orontid descent. At the same time, less attention has been paid to his colleague from Sophene. While most scholars state that Zariadres must also have been of Orontid descent,⁵⁶ only a few scholars have directly addressed the following question:⁵⁷ Is Zareh, known from the inscriptions, the same figure as Zariadres mentioned by Strabo?

According to Messerschmidt, Zariadres known from Strabo, "kann jedoch nicht mit dem in den Inschriften genannten Vater identisch sein, da dieser sich bei Aufteilung des Orontidenbesitzes wohl kaum mit der wesentlich kleineren und unbedeutenderen Landschaft Sophene begnügt hätte."⁵⁸ In turn, Hewsens suggests that Zariadres "appears to have been a relative, perhaps even a son, or a grandson, of the Zareh/Zariadres of Artaxias inscription, and so the latter's brother, half-brother or nephew."⁵⁹

What are we to make of Messerschmidt's objection? It appears that his reasoning in fact begs the question: it implies that Greater Armenia was more important than Sophene at the end of the third and the beginning of the

49 J. Robert, L. Robert 1952–58, 181–185.

50 Habicht 1953.

51 Mahé 1994, 567–596.

52 Sherwin-White, Kuhrt 1993, 195.

53 J. Robert, L. Robert 1952–58, 184–185.

54 Mahé 1994, 580; Facella 2006, 194–195.

55 Sherwin-White, Kuhrt 1993, 195.

56 Toumanoff 1959, 20–21; Hewsens 1984, 347–348, n. 3.

57 So Chaumont 1986.

58 Messerschmidt 1990, 52. Likewise, Schottky 1989, 145.

59 Hewsens 1984, 347–348, n. 3.

second century BCE, and his proposed identification of Artaxias and Zariadres is in fact to justify this conviction. In contrast, Messerschmidt's view on the importance of Greater Armenia appears to be motivated by the subsequent course of the history (when it was indeed the territory of Greater Armenia, which became the heart of Armenia's statehood, and, no less important, the center of Armenian national historiography). Whether or not Greater Armenia was more powerful than Sophene at that time is less clear,⁶⁰ but, above all, is not an issue here. Concerning Hewsen's suggestion, it postulates the existence of yet another historical figure, but no other royal figure bearing this name is known dating from around the third or second centuries BCE in the region. What is more, in chronological terms, the setting of Strabo's narrative (around 188 BCE) and the Armenian inscriptions (the first half of the second century BCE) are in fact contemporary, which makes it impossible to see Zariadres known from Strabo as a grandson of Zariadres of the inscriptions, but also unlikely to suggest the father-son relation. All in all, it appears that the most straightforward interpretation is that both Zariadres and Artaxias, known from Strabo, are also mentioned in the Armenian inscriptions.⁶¹

Furthermore, the epigraphic evidence from Armenia appears to be in general agreement with the data provided by Khorenats'i's *History of the Armenians* [hereinafter MX] 2.37–46 (Ἐβρόντης in Armavir = *Eruand* in MX = Orontes in Str. *Geog.*). It allows us to reconstruct the sequence of succession of Armenian rulers from the end of the third century BCE until the middle of the first century BCE, which is as follows: Orontes (IV), Artaxias, Artavazd, Tigranes (I), Tigranes II (the Great).⁶² This line of succession shows that the new line began by Artaxias (consequently known as the Artaxiads) was akin to the Orontids (the Sevan, Zanguezour, and Teghut inscriptions). Furthermore, if Orontes IV was removed from power by Antiochos III apparently during his Eastern campaign 212–205/204 BCE (following *Geog.* 11.14.15), and his reign lasted 20 years (Moses Khorenats'i 2.46⁶³ whose narrative found more respect among scholars after the discovery of the Armavir evidence), it means that, generally

60 See Wheeler 2002, 88.

61 Likewise Frye 1984, 277; Chahin 1987, 221–222; Sherwin-White, Kuhrt 1993, 195. This investiture of both the father and his son by a foreign monarch would be partly parallel to the later solution of the question of the Armenian throne given by Pompey to Tigranes II and his son, Tigranes the Younger. Besides this, if the two Zariadres are not identical, there is no direct evidence (whatsoever!) for the widespread conviction that Strabo's Zariadres was an Orontid too. None of the three arguments given by Toumanoff 1959, 20–21, if taken soberly, would not indicate Zariadres' Orontid lineage.

62 Mahé 1994, 580; Garsoïan 1997b, 46–47; Facella 2006, 194–195.

63 Thomson 2006a, 184.

speaking, Xerxes (ruler of Sophene) and Orontes IV (ruler of Greater Armenia) were contemporaries and consequently neither could be a successor to the other.⁶⁴ It follows that the separation between Sophene and Greater Armenia had already begun. According to M. Facella, given the attested urbanization activity of Samos and Arsames in the territory of Kommagene and Sophene, the separation must have taken place during their reigns.⁶⁵

In light of the data mentioned above, M. Facella presents the picture of a united history of Armenia and Sophene (with Kommagene) from the Persian period until the second century BCE. In Facella's view, the first separation took place between Greater Armenia on the one hand, and Sophene with Kommagene on the other hand. This transition occurred during the reigns of Samos and Arsames, while the separation between Kommagene and Sophene followed with the installation of Zariadres in Sophene and Artaxias in Greater Armenia.⁶⁶ Lastly, the reign of Ptolemaios in Kommagene in ca. 163 BCE brought about the independence of Kommagene from the Seleucids (see Diod. 31.19).

The most ardent opponent of the mutual history of Sophene (with Kommagene) and Greater Armenia was M.-L. Chaumont, who expressed her position in her review of M. Schottky's book. Chaumont formulated several critical remarks:

- 1 – Many minor rulers in the ancient Near East claimed noble origin of their dynasties in order to legitimize their rule.⁶⁷ For instance, the claim of Achaemenid origin is documented for the dynasties of Kappadokia (the Ariarathids) and Pontos (Mithradates VI Eupator), but is not considered as based on historical reality.⁶⁸ This phenomenon also includes the Seleucid dynasty, which claimed to have descended directly from Alexander the Great. Likewise, Mithradates VI Eupator of Pontos claimed to have descended from Alexander the Great (Just. 38.7.1). In this light, one may wonder if the Nemrud Dağı evidence expresses historical reality⁶⁹ or is a fiction serving propaganda purposes.⁷⁰

64 Facella 2006, 196–197. Contra Lang 1970, 512, Chahin 1987, 218, Mahé 1994, 570.

65 Facella 2006, 196–197.

66 Facella 2006, 199–200.

67 Chaumont 1995, 332–333.

68 Above all, see Panitschek 1987–88. Additionally see Briant 2002, 132–135; Facella 2009, 383–384.

69 Likewise B. Jacobs 2011.

70 Similarly Kühne 2006.

- 2 – One should be critical of making connections between figures appearing in various sources based only on the similarity or identity of personal names: Arsames from Nemrud Dağı may in fact be different from a certain Arsames who gave refuge to the Seleucid pretender Antiochos Hierax in the Armenian mountains (Polyainos 4.17).⁷¹
- 3 – There is no evidence, apart from the from Nemrud Dağı inscriptions, that Kommagene belonged to the satrapy of Armenia in the Persian period; the Euphrates should be seen as the natural border of Armenia, and it was first only during the reign of Tigranes II that Kommagene was annexed by Armenia.⁷²

To summarize, according to Chaumont, rulers of Grater Armenia, Sophene, and Kommagene should be seen as contemporary local rulers, in many cases homonymous but belonging to distinctive local elites, and the rulers of Sophene and Kommagene should not be identified with the Orontids from Greater Armenia.⁷³

What can be said about the status of Sophene before the time of Zariadres? It appears that we must carefully weigh all our options.

- 1 – Following Strabo alone is no longer an option. Modern epigraphic discoveries have shown that he is unaware of any family connections of Artaxias or Zariadres.
- 2 – It appears that Xerxes and Orontes IV were indeed contemporary rulers. If so, it is with Xerxes at the latest, when the Hellenistic kingdom of Sophene emerged.
- 3 – Theoretically, Samos' and Arsames' urbanization policy in Kommagene and Sophene may be understood in two slightly different ways. First, it can be seen as the result of a recent conquest of the new territory by the kings of Armenia, who in founding new cities, aimed at strengthening their hold on this territory. Second, it can also be understood as

71 In the case of Arsames and Seleukos II, according to Chaumont 1995, 333, "il s'agit de satrapes ou de dynastes commagéniens et non pas d'Orontes arméniens." What is more, Chaumont gives another example—the identification of a certain Arsames who hosted a Bithynian prince Ziaelas (Memnon FGrHist 434 Fr. 14.1) with Arsames known from the Nemrud Dağı and Polyainos 4.17. However, the identification of an Armenian ruler who hosted Ziaelas is very tentative, as the text speaks of an anonymous Armenian king only. See Schottky 1989, 98–99.

72 Chaumont 1995, 333.

73 Chaumont 1995, 333.

the manifestation of the establishment of a new dynasty in this region. However, given the fact that the territory as far as the Euphrates apparently belonged already to Orontes III, king of Armenia, the second option appears to be a little more likely.

- 4 – Perhaps the existence of coins struck on behalf of Samos and Arsames provide an additional hint. It has been assumed some time ago that rulers of Sophene started minting their own coinage before the rulers of Greater Armenia because of the proximity and receptivity of Sophene to western Hellenistic influence.⁷⁴ If so, Samos and Arsames started producing their own coinage to legitimize their power in a Hellenistic mode. The same phenomenon started in Greater Armenia much later.⁷⁵
- 5 – Antiochos III's demand that Xerxes pay the due tribute of his father may also point to Sophene as the original holding of Arsames (and possibly Samos). It is theoretically possible that Arsames (Xerxes' father) was the king of Armenia (including Sophene and Kommagene), while his son was the king only of Sophene and Kommagene (without Armenia), but Xerxes was still required by Antiochos III to pay the whole due tribute of his father. However, it is more straightforward to think that Xerxes was required to return his father's due tribute because he held the same position as the father, i.e., the throne of Sophene (and Kommagene).⁷⁶

All in all, Xerxes is the first ruler whose reign in Sophene is explicitly attested in ancient sources. In the current state of research, it also seems to be likely that he had two predecessors who reigned in this area prior to him: Samos and Arsames. These two rulers appear to have established a separate Orontid royal line in western parts of Armenia. Thus, the list of rulers of Sophene before Zariadres can include three other names of rulers who reigned before him: likely Samos and Arsames, and definitely Xerxes. Antiochos III's appointee, Zariadres, belonged to another side line of the Orontids like his son, Artaxias, who started a new royal dynasty in Greater Armenia.

74 Manandian 1965.

75 It has been a matter of discussion whether the production of coinage in Greater Armenia started with Artaxias, a Seleucid nominee, or much later with Tigranes II. See Alram 1986, 69 and Mousheghian, Depeyrot 1999, 31–32 in particular.

76 To some extent likewise Toumanoff 1959, 8.

3.2 The Dynasty of Zariadres

3.2.1 *The Peace of Apamea*

The text of Strabo (*Geog.* 11.14.5) briefly mentions the Romans' defeat of Antiochos III, which marked a new chapter in the history of several *regna minora* in the region. When it comes to Sophene and Greater Armenia, it enabled Zariadres and Artaxias to assume royal titles and became fully independent from the Seleucids.

Several other ancient sources shed light on the background of the defeat of Antiochos III, especially on the conditions of the peace treaty between the Romans and Antiochos III at Apamea in 188 BCE.⁷⁷ The text of the treaty is preserved by Polybios 21.42–43, Appian, *Syr.* 38–39, and Livy 38.38, but the passage most relevant to the present study is given by Livy 38.38.4:⁷⁸

... [Antiochos III] shall withdraw from the cities, lands, villages, and strongholds on this side of the Taurus mountain as far as the Halyn [Tanais] river⁷⁹ and from the valley as far as the ridges of Taurus where is slopes down into Lycaonia.⁸⁰

This sentence, known in scholarship as “the territorial clause,” is formulated from the Roman perspective, i.e., it looks at Asia as from a standpoint in Europe.⁸¹ Consequently, the phrase “on this side of the Tauros” (*cis Taurum montem*) includes all the territory north and west of the Tauros, that is, Sophene and Armenia, but leaves Syria, Mesopotamia, and Iran (all beyond Tauros) to the Seleucids.⁸² In turn, this could mean that at that time, either the reach of

77 For the historical context, see Dillon, Garland 2005, 256–257; Koehn 2012, 513–514; Grainger 2002, 328–349; Dreyer 2007, 340–362; Grainger 2015a, 169–195.

78 For some variances in the extant testimonies of Polybios, Appian, and Livy, see Walbank 1979, 156–164.

79 For a short overview of the controversy over the name of the river (and its related topographical problems), see Gruen 1984, 641, n. 145 and Walbank 2002, 23. This controversy, however, is of no consequence to the present study.

80 Sage 1958, 124–125 (with own modification giving the original name of the key river): “Excedito urbibus agris vicis castellis cis Taurum montem usque ad Tanaïm amnem, et a valle Tauri usque ad iuga, qua in Lycaoniam vergit.”

81 Dillon, Garland 2005, 256; McNicoll, Milner 1997, 118.

82 Chahin 1987, 193–194; Wheeler 2002, 98; Bournoutian 2002, 28; Grainger 2015a, 189–190, 193 (only as an option), who prefers to think that Zariadres and Artaxias assumed their royal titles only after Antiochos III's death. Strabo's text appears to favor an earlier date, as it explicitly and strongly connects the independence of Zariadres and Artaxias with

Sophene did not extend beyond Tauros into the upper Tigris Valley or only its western parts were secured by the peace treaty. At any rate, the clause separates Sophene and Kommagene, leaving the latter to the Seleucids. In other words, "Sophene won its independence but lost its rule of Kommagene west of the Euphrates."⁸³

How could the political situation after the peace of Apamea be characterized? We know that after 188 BCE, Antiochos III undertook another campaign to the east of his kingdom. This campaign is referenced in the sources only based on its conclusion (Antiochos III is said to have been killed while attempting to seize a temple treasure somewhere in Elymais; see Diod. [28.3, 29.15]), but, generally speaking, it appears to be located in the eastern satrapies of the Seleucid Kingdom.⁸⁴ It appears that the territorial clause of the Apamea Treaty kept both Sophene and Greater Armenia safe from Antiochos III's imperial ambitions.⁸⁵

At the same time, *Geog.* 11.14.5 describes a series of conquests by the kings of Sophene and Greater Armenia, and although the identification of many toponyms is uncertain, there is a high probability that at least some conquests flaunted the territorial *status quo* of the Apamea peace (e.g., conquests south of the Tauros in the Upper Tigris River Valley).

Any conquests undertaken south of the Tauros range may have provoked Antiochos III's successors to intervene against Sophene and Greater Armenia (in the latter case, conquests in Media as well).⁸⁶ It is frequently assumed that such a campaign took place under Antiochos IV Epiphanes in 165 BCE.⁸⁷ It should be noted, however, that the sources in question (Diod. 31.17a; App.

Antiochos III's defeat against the Romans. Likewise, Schottky 1989, 139, Mittag 2006, 51, and many others who agree with this line of thought.

83 Wheeler 2002, 98.

84 Gera 1998, 99–100; Grainger 2015a, 190–192.

85 Chahin 1987, 193–194; Wheeler 2002, 98; Bournoutian 2002, 28; Grainger 2015a, 189–190, 193; Grainger 2015a, 189–190, 193 (only as an option).

86 Likewise L. Patterson 2001, 159–160. Even without the conquests, Antiochos IV Epiphanes did not necessarily have to keep the obligations of his father, since the treaty provisions may have had no legal validity after the death of the ruler who signed them. See Paltiel 1979, 30–41 (mainly about arrears), Grainger 2015a, 193–194.

87 Will 1967, 296–298; Brodersen 1989, 66, 209; Gera 1998, 217–218; Wolski 1999, 98; Mittag 2006, 296–298. The date can be established thanks to references in the Babylonian astronomical diaries, which show that Antiochos IV Epiphanes was active on the Persian Gulf in 164 BCE (see Sachs, Hunger, 1996, 496–497). Perhaps Antiochos IV's fighting against Artaxias is also mentioned in the diaries, if the region *Armil* and the city *Habigalbat* are to be located in Armenia. See del Monte 1997, 80–81; Gera, Horowitz 1997, 243–249.

Syr., 66 and 45; Porphyrios FGrHist, no. 260, F38 and F56) only explicitly mention Antiochos IV's fight with Artaxias, King of Artaxata.⁸⁸ Aside from this, Antiochos IV most likely proceeded from Artaxata to Mesopotamia.⁸⁹ Of course, it is possible that Antiochos IV's forces went through Sophene on their march to Greater Armenia.⁹⁰ In support of this assumption, it has been pointed to the city foundation of Ἐπιφάνεια (Epiphaneia) on the Tigris (κατὰ Τίγριν), which is known exclusively from the remarks of Stephen of Byzantium, who notes that the city was also called Ἀρχεσίκερτα (and was founded by Ἀρχεσίος).⁹¹ Stephen's remarks allow us to identify the foundation of this city with *Arkathiokerta, one of the royal cities of Sophene.⁹² If this foundation took place under the reign Antiochos IV Epiphanes,⁹³ it may be interpreted as an honorable gesture on the part of the King of Sophene towards the Seleucid monarch.⁹⁴ It is important to observe that, provided the submission of Sophene to Antiochos IV Epiphanes took place, we do not hear of any direct combat occurring (unlike the case of Artaxias, who was taken prisoner by Antiochos IV: App. Syr., 66, 45), which may suggest that Zariadres recognized Antiochos' authority over him in sufficient time and was allowed to remain as a client king in Sophene.⁹⁵

88 Likewise Schottky 1989, 193.

89 Gera, Horowitz 1997, 243–249; Gera 1998, 218.

90 Schottky 1989, 193: „dessen Territorium auf dem Feldzug nach dem östlichen Teil der Gebirgsregion durchquert werden musste.“ Perhaps it is safer to state that it was the most convenient route—to cross the Euphrates at Tomisa and to proceed along the Euphrates valley to Artaxata. Likewise, Sherwin-White, Kuhrt 1993, 17.

91 Stephen of Byzantium, *Ethnica* 98. See Billerbeck 2011, 154. For Epiphaneia, see G.M. Cohen 2013, 47–48 (with further reading suggestions).

92 Furthermore, Chaumont 1993, 434–436 suggests two identifications ‘on the ground’: Eğil or Amida. The identification of Eğil as Arkathiokerta is more widespread.

93 For the fact that many of Antiochos' foundations bore this name (coined after Antiochos' cultic name—Epiphanes), see Tarn 1984, 150 and Chaumont 1993, 434, n. 17 (with further bibliography).

94 Although the refoundation of one of the key royal cities of Sophene may also be theoretically interpreted as a complete overtaking of Sophene sovereignty. Yet, even Artaxias appears to have regained his freedom and power once he recognized Antiochos IV Epiphanes' authority over him (Diod. 31.17a and Porphyrios FGrHist, no. 260, F38 and F56). Likewise Brodersen 1989, 66; Chaumont 1993, 435; Gera 1998, 218.

95 Likewise Schottky 1989, 193. Antiochos IV Epiphanes is known to have accepted the rule of other vassals in the areas formally belonging to the Seleucid kingdom. For instance, the appointment of Hyspaosines in Charakene as a governor (see Schuol 2000, 291–300; Grabowski 2011, 133).

3.2.2 *Mithrobouzanēs*

Thanks to a brief reference in Diodorus 31.22 (also Polyb. 31.16, but his text is lacunal), we know of the name of the successor of Zariadres on the throne of Sophene. According to Diod. 31.22,⁹⁶

after Ariarathes had restored Mithrobouzanēs to his ancestral domain, Artaxias, the king of Armenia, abating not a whit his original rapacity sent envoys to Ariarathes, urging him to make common cause with him, and proposing that they should each put to death the young man who was at his court, and divide Sophene between them. Ariarathes, to whom such villainy was completely foreign, rebuked the envoys and wrote to Artaxias, urging him to abstain from such actions.

The context of Diodorus' narrative makes clear that Artaxias mentioned by him is identical to the king of Armenia known from *Geog.* 11.14.5 (thus, Artaxias I from 188 BCE). The next ruler of Armenia bearing the same name ARTAXIAS is attested only at the end of the first century (ca. 30–20 BCE).⁹⁷ In turn, several rulers of Kappadokia bore the name Ariarathes, but, for chronological reasons, Ariarathes IV (Eusebes) who ruled between ca. 220 and 163 BCE must be the king mentioned by Diodorus.⁹⁸ However, it is hardly possible to put a precise date on the reign on Mithrobouzanēs. He certainly started his reign during the lifetime of Ariarathes IV, i.e., before ca. 163 BCE, but we do not know exactly when it began and how long it lasted.

The narrative appears to imply that some disruption took place in Sophene, which led to the occurrence of a power vacuum on the throne and an accession crisis.⁹⁹ Two potential royal successors were to be found at the royal courts of Kappadokia and Greater Armenia, which may have either been the site of their very recent refuge or their permanent living arrangements well before the disruption began.¹⁰⁰ In the latter case, their stay could be understood in the light of the common royal practice of sending royal children and successors to the foreign courts of allied nations. If Mithrobouzanēs indeed resided at the court of Ariarathes IV before the disruption in Sophene,¹⁰¹

⁹⁶ Walton 1957, 370–373.

⁹⁷ Garsoïan 1997b, 62.

⁹⁸ Niese 1895, 817–818; Mørkholm 1991, 193–194.

⁹⁹ Sullivan 1977b, 745–746; Walbank 1979, 484; L. Patterson 2001, 160.

¹⁰⁰ Thus (as the place of refuge) Sullivan 1977b, 745–746 and L. Patterson 2001, 160.

¹⁰¹ Perhaps so Schottky 2000, 292.

this suggests very close ties between Zariadres and Ariarathes IV,¹⁰² as it appears that Mithrobouzanēs must have been placed at the Kappadokian court by the King of Sophene, most likely Zariadres. His residence in Kappadokia may even hint at a dynastic marriage between Mithrobouzanēs and Ariarathes IV's daughter, although the latter is only an approximate due to the silence of sources.¹⁰³

According to M. Schottky, Mithrobouzanēs was the son of Zariadres.¹⁰⁴ Neither Polybios nor Diodorus identify him so explicitly, but the chronological proximity between the last attestation of Zariadres' reign (after 188 BCE) and the first (and last) mention of Mithrobouzanēs in the ancient sources makes this assumption probable.¹⁰⁵

3.3 Sophene and the Third Mithridatic War

For most of the second century BCE, Sophene existed as an independent kingdom. We can list a number of its kings (some of them, however, only on the basis of numismatic evidence; see above). The first change came with the advent of the Parthians, who most likely reached the territory of Sophene during the reign of Mithradates II (122–91 BCE).¹⁰⁶ Given the character of the Parthian monarchy, this change was not dramatic. The kings of Sophene had to acknowledge the suzerainty of the Parthian King of Kings, but still enjoyed

102 I find the glimmers of such an idea in Facella 2006, 204, n. 8 who deems Ariarathes and Artaxias as “tutores” of the Sophene princes.

103 The same could be suggested for Sophene's ties with Greater Armenia, however ironic this appears to be in the light of Artaxias' brutal initiative.

104 Schottky 2000, 292.

105 According to L. Patterson 2001, 160, Mithrobouzanēs was probably the son of Mithradates, whom L. Patterson 2001, 160 identifies as the king of Sophene (following Mørkholm 1966, 29, n. 35 on this point). Mithradates appears in ancient sources on the account of the Anatolian war of 183–179 BCE. He is called ὁ τῆς πλείστης Ἀρμενίας ἄρχων (Pol. 25.2.12), which has been usually attributed to Armenia Lesser (Reinach 1890, 41, n. 1; Walbank 1979, 272–273; Schottky 1989, 192, 195; Facella 2006, 184–186). It has also been speculated that the Mithradates of the Anatolian war could be a match for Antiochos III's nephew (mentioned in Polyb. 8.23 as the suggested replacement for the rebelling Xerxes). However, it is not certain who the father of Mithradates (mentioned in Polyb. 8.23) was and which of Antiochos III's sisters was his mother. At any rate, all suggested connections are tentative, and there is no direct evidence for there being any king of Sophene named Mithradates. See H.H. Schmitt 1964, 28–30 and Paton, Walbank, Habicht 2011, 595, n. 66.

106 Debevoise 1938, 22–28; Olbrycht 2010a, 171–175; Dabrowa 2012, 170–172.

their own royal status and had plenty of autonomy. An abrupt change in the history of Sophene came only with Tigranes II, king of Armenia, who managed to conquer vast areas of territory in the Near East, ranging from the Pontic Mountains to Mesopotamia, and from the Caspian Sea to the Mediterranean.

According to *Geog.* 11.14.15, Sophene's king Artanes was "overcome by Tigranes, who established himself as lord of all." How can we understand Strabo's statement, and when can we date this event?

In 95 BCE Tigranes II, better known as Tigranes the Great (95–55 BCE¹⁰⁷), was released by his sovereign Mithradates II, king of Parthia (after his staying as a hostage at the Parthian court) and appointed as the king of Armenia.¹⁰⁸ The move against Sophene appears to be one of Tigranes II's first actions attributed to him by ancient writers (especially *Geog.* 11.14.15).¹⁰⁹ Consequently, it is dated to about 95 BCE.¹¹⁰ It was followed by Tigranes II's involvement in Kappadokia (in 95 or early 94 BCE¹¹¹) which in turn sparked the first Roman reaction to Tigranes II's aggressive acts: the mission of Sulla, which should perhaps be dated to between 94 and 93 BCE.¹¹²

The question arises as to what precisely happened to Sophene and its king after Tigranes II's invasion. Two alternative options have been suggested. First, Artanes was left as the king of Sophene, but was subdued to Tigranes II like many other kings who had to acknowledge Tigranes' superiority (and in this case, the situation would mirror the Parthian practice).¹¹³ Or second, Artanes was deposed and Sophene was directly annexed into Armenia by Tigranes II.¹¹⁴

What speaks in favor of the first option? First, Tigranes II stylized himself as "the king of the kings," and is said to always appear in the company of four

107 Chahin 1987, 225; Garsoïan 1997b, 52.

108 The date can now be safely settled due to the references to the country of *ar-mi-ni-i* (Armenia) and the Armenian crown prince *ti-ig-ra-nu* in two Babylonian astronomical diaries. See Geller, Traina 2013.

109 Magie 1950, 338–339; Manandian 1965, 27; Chaumont 1985–88, 25; Chaumont 1986; Sullivan 1990, 99; Garsoïan 1997b, 54; Olbrycht 2009, 169.

110 Sullivan 1990, 99: "soon after his accession"; Olbrycht 2009, 169.

111 De Callatay 1997, 274; Olbrycht 2009, 173.

112 The traditional date 92 BCE was called into question by Badian 1959, who instead proposed 96 BCE and found some following (Keaveney 1981, T.C. Brennan 1992, Kallet-Marx 1995, 355, Wolski 2003, 76). However, in light of the data gleaned from the Babylonian astronomic diaries, this date is impossible to accept. The year 92 BCE appears to be too late if the Roman reaction is considered to have taken place without considerable delay. See Olbrycht 2009, 1973 and n. 93 on p. 184.

113 Sullivan 1990, 99; Olbrycht 2009, 169.

114 Bedoukian 1985, 15; Wheeler 2002, 98.

other minor rulers (Plut. *Luc.* 21.5). Secondly, this question also touches on the broader issue of the organization of Tigranes' empire. According to Pliny the Elder *HN* 6.27, ancient Armenia was divided into 120 districts ("dividitur, quod certum est, in praefecturas, quas strategias vocant"). It is, however, uncertain if this division should be attributed to Tigranes II or perhaps to Tiridates I,¹¹⁵ or even dated with any precision at all. At any rate, the texts appear to reflect the geopolitical situation in Armenian lands, where the authority of the king of the kings did not exclude the existence of local domains of dynastic houses, which could at times assume royal titles, but were otherwise known to later Armenian sources as *nakharars*.

On the other hand, we never again specifically hear of the king of Sophene in the company of Tigranes II, although other minor royal figures from the region do appear, e.g., Zarbienos, the king of Gordyene, and an anonymous king of Adiabene. Furthermore, we know that Tigranes II had his royal treasuries in Sophene, which suggests a great deal of control over this territory. Lastly, on the occasion of Pompey's arrangement of the borders in the region, Sophene is (first) given to the son of Tigranes II, as if this throne was vacant and available for a placement, at least by 66/65 BCE.

Can the text alone give us a definite answer? Strabo's κατελύθη is translated in the following ways: [Tigranes] "stürzte ihn,"¹¹⁶ "was overcome,"¹¹⁷ "oppressus est,"¹¹⁸ "wurde unterjocht,"¹¹⁹ "was put down,"¹²⁰ and "fut renversé."¹²¹ In this light, Strabo's expression should be understood in the sense of overthrowing.¹²² This is also confirmed by the silence of sources on the further activity of Sophene's king. Therefore, we can conclude that Tigranes II removed Artanes from the throne.

The end of Tigranes II's possession of Sophene must have taken place together with the appearance of the Roman legions in Sophene 69 BCE.¹²³ At that time, Lucullus gave Sophene's Tomisa to Ariobarzanes I, king of Cappadokia

115 Wheeler 2002, 98.

116 Radt 2004, 300.

117 H.L. Jones 1928, 336–337.

118 Müller, Dübner 1853, 456.

119 Forbiger 1913, 768. Likewise Groskurd 1834, 440.

120 Roller 2014, 511.

121 Lasserre 1975, 130.

122 Plutarch's choice of vocabulary to describe the end of Zarbienos is of course much stronger. Zarbienos is said to have been put to death, to be precise, to have his throat cut off (ἀποσφάζω).

123 Eckhardt 1910a, 82; Holmes 1923, 191–196; Magie 1950, 344; Sherwin-White 1984, 176.

(Plut. *Pomp.* 33.4), and the forces of Tigranes II are never again reported to be active in Sophene during the Third Mithridatic War.

Sophene was clearly seen as a political entity by all fighting sides during the Third Mithridatic War (74 or 73–63 BCE¹²⁴). The Romans decided to keep Tigranes II in Greater Armenia and to appoint Tigranes the Younger to Sophene with the promise of his subsequent succession in Greater Armenia after the father's death. This initiative appears to implicitly treat the throne of Sophene as an appendage to the kingdom of Greater Armenia.¹²⁵ The fact that Pompey's forces had troubles with Tigranes the Younger's accomplices preventing Tigranes II/the Romans from gaining access to Armenian royal treasures in Sophene's cities shows that Tigranes the Younger managed to gain possession of Sophene, even if for a very short time before late 66/65 BCE (see here the evidence of the Aşvan hoard).¹²⁶ Once Tigranes the Younger quarreled with the Romans, he was put in chains and taken in triumph to Rome. Sophene, according to Appian, was in turn given to the king of Kappadokia. This could take place either immediately after the break with Tigranes the Younger in late 66/65 BCE or in the aftermath of the Roman arrangements in the Near East in 64 BCE.¹²⁷

Appian's text is the only testimony that explicitly refers to the fate of Sophene after the Third Mithridatic War. Therefore, it requires special attention. In Appian's own words, "Pompey pardoned him [Tigranes II] for the past, reconciled him with his son [Tigranes the Younger], and decided that the latter should rule Sophene and Gordyene (which are now called Lesser Armenia), and the father the rest of Armenia, and that at his death the son should succeed him in that also" (App. *Mith.* 105)¹²⁸ In turn, after the break with Tigranes the Younger, "to Ariobarzanes he [Pompey] gave back the kingdom of Kappadokia and added to it Sophene and Gordyene, which he had partitioned to the son of Tigranes, and which are now administered as parts of Kappadokia" (App. *Mith.* 105).¹²⁹

¹²⁴ McGing 1984, 12–18.

¹²⁵ Reinach 1890, 392–393.

¹²⁶ The destruction in Aşvan Kale, dated to late 66 or 65 BCE due to the find of the hoard of Kappadokian coins, can be interpreted as the result of Roman forces taking over fortresses loyal to Tigranes the Younger. The background of these events is described by Cass. Dio 36.53. See also Holmes 1923, 207–228.

¹²⁷ Holmes 1923, 210; Magie 1950, 360–361; Wheeler 2002, 98.

¹²⁸ White 1922, 439.

¹²⁹ White 1922, 441.

Appian's statement has aroused a great deal of discussion among scholars. Scholars have pointed to several possible mistakes, especially naming Sophene and Gordyene Lesser Armenia (αἱ νῦν ἄρα εἰσὶν Ἀρμενία βραχυτέρα),¹³⁰ and attributing Gordyene to the rule of Kappadokia.¹³¹ This would hardly be imaginable in geopolitical terms and is actually contradicted by other testimony, which shows that Gordyene became a bone of contention between Armenia and Parthia and was finally assigned to Armenia by Pompey (Plutarch, *Pomp.* 36.2; Cass. Dio 38.5.4.).¹³² As for the possible connection with Kappadokia, it should be noted that the rule of Tigranes the Younger in Sophene is characterized by Appian as ἄρχειν, that of Ariobarzanes I in Kappadokia with Sophene as βασιλεύειν, while the connection between the Roman province of Cappadocia and Sophene in Appian's time is expressed with the verb στρατηγείται.¹³³ The last verb may well express a sort of "oversight of client territory and response to trouble in the area,"¹³⁴ and does not suggest that Sophene became part of the Roman Empire at that time (Appian lived in ca. 95–165 CE, his description

130 Wheeler 2002, 103–106 gives several examples which aim at showing that the term of Lesser / Little Armenia may vary in its geographical attribution (Wheeler 2002, 103: "Calling the area Armenia may be extreme but not necessarily wrong."). By way of illustration, Menander Protector (fl. 600) refers to the area of Artaz, southeast of Mount Ararat, as Lesser Armenia. Moreover, in the *Geography* of Ananias of Širak (ca. 610–685), the term Lesser Armenia has various meanings: for instance, Kilikia and Kappadokia are called Lesser Armenia; likewise, Lesser Armenia denotes an Armenian conclave in southern Caucasian Albania; furthermore, Ananias speaks of Lesser Armenia as located *east* of Melitene which may indeed denote the territory of Sophene. Finally, Suet. *Jul.* 44.3 recalls Julius Caesar's plans to wage a war on Parthia "through smaller Armenia" (*per Armeniam minorem*) which would have been strategically very strange if "smaller Armenia" is to be understood as the later Roman province of Armenia (Antonius who may have been realizing Caesar's plan invaded Parthia through the Zeugma crossing). Regardless of whether or not Wheeler's examples convince in showing that Appian was *correct* in calling Sophene Lesser Armenia, the assembled data does at least weaken the impression of complete ignorance on Appian's side and helps save his evidence for consideration.

131 Wheeler 2002, 101 suggests that the mistake about Gordyene results from Appian's association between Sophene's southern border reaching the Masion Mountains (also called the Gordyaeon Mountains on occasion) and Gordyene itself. For other mistakes (especially concerning Nikopolis), see Frankfort 1963, 186–187, Goukowsky 2001, 240–241 nn. 992, 996–997; Wheeler 2002, 100.

132 Frankfort 1963, 186; Wheeler 2002, 101.

133 Mendelssohn 1879, 545–546; Viereck, Ross, Gabba 1939, 514–515; Mondadori 1999, 142; Goukowsky 2001, 107–108.

134 Wheeler 2002, 101. LSJ's (LSJ 1651) suggested meaning: "rule as a province" appears to be somewhat conventional.

likely refers to later stages of his life, when he assumed various public offices, especially in Rome and Egypt).

To conclude, the evidence is ambiguous. It is definitely possible to argue either way: some scholars have accepted the connection between Kappadokia and Sophene,¹³⁵ while others reject it and consider Sophene as reverted to Greater Armenia.¹³⁶ What is worse, except for two writers and their brief references (Cicero *Ad fam.* 15.2.2; 15.3.1; 15.4.4 and Tac. *Ann.* 13.7), there is a daunting lack of any sources for the subsequent century and a half. Namely, in 51 BCE Cicero (as the proconsul of Cilicia) saw the Euphrates as the eastern border of Kappadokia.¹³⁷ At the same time, in 63 CE Nero made the decision on the affiliation of Sophene as if it was within the reach of his power. Thus, we must remain within the sphere of speculation: perhaps the situation was very fluid. Depending on the geopolitical constellation in the region, Sophene and its elites were more dependent on Kappadokia or tended more towards the Armenian and Parthian sphere of influence. The first option may have been the case in times of mighty rulers in Kappadokia: Ariobarzanes I (96/95 BCE–63 BCE) and Archelaos I Philopatris (36 BCE–17 CE). The second may have occurred during the reigns of other Kappadokian rulers, e.g., during the reign of Ariobarzanes II Philopator (63–52 BCE), Ariobarzanes III Eusebes Philorhomaioi (52–42 BCE), and Ariarathes X Eusebes Philadelphos (42–36 BCE).¹³⁸ At any rate, we may envisage Sophene's situation in a similar way as the status of Edessa in the following centuries. The Romans would certainly have been interested in controlling bridgeheads on the Euphrates in this part of the world—at Zeugma (opposite Apamea) near Osrhoene¹³⁹ and Tomisa in Sophene. Furthermore, indirect political control over both Osrhoene and Sophene would also have been beneficial for Rome, though not as critical as the bridgeheads. In this regard, control over Sophene may have been even more important, as it straddled two important points of the Melitene-Tigranokerta route—the Tomisa crossing and the Ergani pass.

135 Reinach 1890, 393; Bouché-Leclercq 1913–14, 440; Holmes 1923, 210; Wheeler 2002, 99–106.

136 Frankfort 1963, 186–187; Syme 1995, 95–96, 139–140; Mordalioni 1999, 206–206, nn. 266–267; Goukowsky 2001, 240–241, nn. 991, 992, 996–997; Sherwin-White 1984, 224–225, n. 102 and p. 226.

137 Sherwin-White 1984, 224–225, n. 102 and p. 226.

138 Sullivan 1980, 1125–1168.

139 Edwell 2008, 11. For Zeugma, see Gawlikowski 1996.

3.4 Sohaemus and the Peace of Rhandeia

The next event in the history of Sophene known from ancient sources is connected with the Roman invasion of Armenia in 58–66 CE.

We read in Tac. *Ann.* 13.7 that shortly after his succession (54 CE) Emperor Nero made some decisions in reshaping the geopolitical landscape of the Near East in anticipation of the Roman invasion of Armenia (in response to the Parthian takeover there). That is to say, Lesser Armenia and the district (*regio*) of Sophene were assigned to new rulers: Aristobulos the Herodian and a certain Sohaemus, respectively.

The question arises as to who the new ruler of Sophene was. Many scholars point to the royal house of Emesa, where, after his death, Azizus, ruler of Emesa, was succeeded by his brother Sohaemus in 54 CE (*Ant.* 20.158).¹⁴⁰ However, this identification has also been objected to for geopolitical reasons: Emesa and Sophene lay too far apart to form one territory under the rule of one king.¹⁴¹ It has also been suggested that Sohaemus could not be the king of Sophene and Emesa at the same time; consequently, Sohaemus serves as a dynasty name, perhaps referring to an otherwise unknown minor prince of the Emesa royal house.¹⁴² Yet, the practice of ruling over a few territories separated geographically from was not unusual among Roman client kings at that time.¹⁴³ It is attested to by Sohaemus' contemporaries, Antiochos IV of Kommagene, who also ruled in Lykaonia and Kilikia Tracheia, as well as Polemo of Pontos, who also had control over parts of Kilikia.¹⁴⁴ Thus, there are no reasons to object to the identification of Sohaemus, a new ruler of Sophene in ca. 54 CE, with the ruler of Emesa.

Do we know anything else about the rule of Sohaemus in Sophene? Unfortunately, we do not know any details due to the silence of the ancient sources. First, in *Ann.* 14.26 Tacitus reports on the establishment of Tigranes VI, the Roman nominee as the king of Armenia (60 CE). On this occasion we do not hear of Sohaemus again, although Tacitus mentions that Tigranes VI's reign in Armenia was to be protected by neighboring client-kings, among whom he lists

140 Debevoise 1938, 179; Sullivan 1977a, 198–219, especially 216–218; Sinclair 1989, 138; Swain 1996, 304, n. 27; Adams 2007, 254. Of special attention is the publication of Barrett 1977.

141 Ar. Stein 1927, 796; Magie 1950, 1412, n. 41; Frankfort 1963, 188–189 who suggests that Tacitus' mistake may have resulted from the phonetic similarity of the two names, *Sohaemus* and *Sophene*.

142 Ar. Stein 1927, 796; J.G.C. Anderson 1934, 758; Magie 1950, 554, 112.

143 Barrett 1977, 155–157; Sullivan 1977a, 216.

144 Barrett 1977, 157–158.

Aristobulos from Lesser Armenia, Antiochos IV of Kommagene, Pharasmanes I of Iberia, and Polemos of Kilikia. It follows that Sohaemus was no longer in duty in Sophene.¹⁴⁵ What is more, the territory of Sophene became the scene for the final fighting between the Romans and the Parthians in 62–63 CE (Tac. *Ann.* 15.7–17; Cass. Dio 62.19–23, see above): the Romans established a camp at Rhandeia on the Arsianias River [Murat River/Lower Euphrates]), secured the nearby Tauros pass [Ergani Pass] by placing a garrison there and a large contingent of cavalry on the adjoining plain [the Kharput plain]. Paetus also placed a small garrison in Arsamosata, the first capital of Sophene.¹⁴⁶ The final battle, actually the siege of the Roman camp, and the subsequent peace treaty also took place at Rhandeia.¹⁴⁷ Thus, to be stressed again, although all these events took place in the heart of ancient Sophene, we never hear of Sohaemus again.

In contrast, it should be stressed that Sohaemus does not disappear from ancient sources altogether, but is only absent there in the context of Sophene and Armenia.¹⁴⁸ For instance, Sohaemus is mentioned in the context of the Jewish-Roman war on the occasion of the beginning of the Jewish revolt in 66 CE (*Bell.* 2.500, *Bell.* 3.68), the proclamation of Vespasian as Emperor by Eastern legions in 69 CE (Tac. *Hist.* 2.81), and the final assault on Jerusalem by Titus in 70 CE (Tac. *Hist.* 5.1.4). Sohaemus is also mentioned as the Roman ally when the Romans attacked Antiochos IV of Kommagene in 72/73 CE (*Bell.* 7.219).

Thus, it appears that there is no other possibility than to acknowledge that Sohaemus' reign was short-lived and ended by 60 CE.¹⁴⁹ What is more, Sohaemus' appointment is most likely to be understood in a specific context of the Roman policy of emergency royal appointments in times of war. It was not meant to provide competent government in a long term, but rather to deal with a particular emergency, most likely to provide military help.¹⁵⁰

Another question to be addressed is what happened to Sophene after the treaty of Rhandeia. Again, the sources do not provide us with any direct references to the status of Sophene, neither in the peace treaty nor afterwards. It appears that we have only two distant hints.

First, given the fact that the Romans' temporary appointment of Sohaemus lasted no longer than until ca. 60 CE, when the Romans installed Tigranes VI, their own nominee on the throne in Greater Armenia, and that the peace

145 Barrett 1977, 156; Barrett 1979, 465–469.

146 Marciak 2012a, 318.

147 Marciak 2012a, 318.

148 Barrett 1977, 155.

149 Barrett 1977, 155.

150 Barrett 1977, 155–156.

of Rhandeia led to the emergence of a client kingdom in Greater Armenia, it looks like from both the Roman and Parthian perspectives, the problem of Armenia was by far more important than that of Sophene. Apparently, resolving the former included the solution to the latter. That is to say, it appears that Sophene was nominally included as part of Greater Armenia in the peace treaty at Rhandeia. This is, of course, an official point of view, and in the future, the situation of a weak kingship in Greater Armenia likely led to strengthening the importance of local Armenian dynasties in the region.

Second, another distant hint comes only from about half a century later when Trajan begins his Parthian war.¹⁵¹ Namely, the first stage of Roman invasion took place in the Euphrates region and was directed against Greater Armenia. Trajan's first objective was to reach Satala from Melitene. According to Cass. Dio (68.19.2), Trajan did not meet with any opposition at Samosata. This statement implies that, by reaching Samosata, Trajan already crossed into enemy territory. This is in turn very suspicious, as most likely Samosata was not in Parthian hands at that time. Therefore, it has been suggested that Samosata should be emended into [Ar]samosata.¹⁵² This also makes some sense in geographical terms, as from Melitene, Trajan could indeed choose two routes to reach Satala: a longer route via modern Sivas and another via modern Elazığ and Tunceli. If the emendation is correct, which appears likely, then Sophene does not appear to be in Roman control in 114 CE. However useful for illuminating the situation in 114 CE this reference is, it should be noted that the status of Arsamosata in 114 CE may also have resulted from contemporary military developments rather than reflecting long-term geopolitical arrangements.

3.5 Sophene in the Context of the Roman-Sasanian Wars

Several important geopolitical developments in the upper Tigris region took place as a result of Roman-Sasanian wars from the third to the sixth centuries CE. The main events which reshaped the geopolitical situation of the region are as follows: the Roman-Persian peace treaty in 298 CE in Nisibis, the Roman-Persian peace treaty in 363 CE after the death of Emperor Julian on the Persian campaign, and, finally, the territorial and administrative reforms of the Byzantine Empire in the sixth century CE.

Petros Patrikios is the main source about the 298 CE Roman-Persian peace treaty in Nisibis, despite the fact that he wrote retrospectively only in the sixth

151 Lightfoot 1990, 117–118.

152 See Bertinelli 1976, 12–13, n. 49 who cites older literature.

century CE and delivered only the principal points of the peace agreements.¹⁵³ According to Petros Patrikios (FGrHist IV, Fr. 14),¹⁵⁴

the principal points of the embassy were these: that in the eastern region the Romans should have Intelene with Sophene, Arzanene with [the territories] of the *Karduenoi* and Zabdikene, that the river Tigris should be the boundary between each state, that the fortress Zintha, which lies on the border of Media, should mark the edge of Armenia, that the king of Iberia should pay to the Romans the insignia of his kingdom and that the city of Nisibis, which lies on the Tigris, should be the place for transactions.

In turn, the conditions of the 363 CE peace treaty are known from Ammianus Marcellinus, who took part in the unsuccessful Roman campaign against Persia. It is generally held that Ammianus gives only general conditions of the new diplomatic regulation, and not precise quotations from what would have been a diplomatic document. According to Amm. 25.7.9, the Persian king Shapur II

demanded the lands which (he said) were his and had been taken from him long ago by Maximianus; but, in fact, as the negotiations showed, he required as our ransom five provinces on the far side of the Tigris: Arzanena, Moxoena, and Zabdicena, as well as Rehimena and Corduena with fifteen fortresses, besides Nisibis, Singara and Castra Maurorum, a very important stronghold.¹⁵⁵

The first two clauses of Petros Patrikios' text are of direct importance for the history of Sophene. The first clause brings a list of countries in the region gained by Rome from Persia.¹⁵⁶ This list has aroused a great deal of discussion among scholars on several accounts:

153 Other sources (rather supplementary in use) are Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 39.34–37; Eutrop. 9.25.1; Jer. *Chron.* a.2320; Oros. 7.2.10–11; Fest. 14 and 25.

154 Translation of Dodgeon, Lieu 1991, 133 with some modifications.

155 Ammianus' text used here is that of Rolfe 1940.

156 The assumption made by some scholars (e.g. Ensslin 1942, 48–50; Chaumont 1969, 126; Felix 1985, 125–126) that the countries in question were ceded to Rome from Armenia and not from Persia cannot be confirmed. First, no Roman sources literally say so. Second, the treaty was concluded between Rome and Persia which rather suggests Persia losing its own territory. Third, later sources suggest that the Persians saw the 298 territorial losses as infringement of their rights (Amm. Marc 15.5.6, 25.7.9 and esp. 19.9.2 where Shapur II

- first, the identification and geographical attribution of the key toponyms/ethnonyms,
- second, the relation of Petros Patrikios' list to other Roman-Persian treaties, especially to the 363 CE peace treaty,
- and finally, the course of the Roman-Sasanian border from 298 CE.

Concerning the identification and geographical attribution of the key toponyms/ethnonyms, two issues are particularly controversial, i.e., the identification and the location of the toponym Sophene and the location of Zabdikene. For our current purposes, only the first question matters now.

First, some scholars have suggested that the preposition *metā* should be seen as an indication of the higher status (of Ingilene towards Sophene, and Arzanene towards Karduene with Zabdikene).¹⁵⁷ If so, then the geographical attribution of Sophene is problematic. If Sophene is understood as a small district located immediately east of the Euphrates and west of the Tauros pass at Ergani and Ingilene as the territory around Eğil, then the large territory between Ingilene (with its eastern border on the western Tigris) and Arzanene (with its western border on the Batman River) appears to be a vacuum.¹⁵⁸ Theoretically, one can suggest another option: Ingilene is again understood as the country around Eğil, but Sophene as a catchword for all other territories once forming the kingdom of Sophene including the large territory between Ingilene and Arzanene.¹⁵⁹ This would, however, be a strange solution because it would have Ingilene as a relatively small district, surrounded by a territorially larger district of Sophene. At the same time, it is Ingilene that would be administratively in charge of Sophene. Another solution would be to again understand Sophene as a small district between the Euphrates and the Tauros, but to assume that the large territory between the western Tigris and the Batman was subsumed under another toponym from the list, i.e., under Ingilene or Arzanene.¹⁶⁰ Yet, the only geographical attestation of Ingilene we know is that of the country around Eğil. In other words, the extension of Ingilene over the Tigris is not confirmed by any other sources, and it is un-

take revenges on the Transtigritani as on his disloyal subjects). See Mosig-Walburg 2009, 125–128.

157 Markwart 1901, 171; Toumanoff 1963, 175–176; Winter 1989, 556.

158 Weissbach 1927b, 1017: “wie ein polnischer Korridor zwischen zwei römische Gebiete eingedrungen wäre”; Winter 1989, 557.

159 Weissbach 1927b, 1018 (as an option); Chaumont 1969, 124 (as an option).

160 Markwart 1901, 171 (under Ingilene); Hübschmann 1904, 219, n. 4 (under Ingilene); Lehmann-Haupt 1921, 184; Winter 1989, 557 (under Ingilene).

clear to what extent such a geopolitical entity with the center in Eḡil but including parts of the upper Tigris valley between the western Tigris and the Batman would have been functional. The only distant parallel may be given from the history of the Hellenistic kingdom of Sophene (and not from the history of the small district of Ingilene). We know that at some point Sophene included the region around Arkathiokerta (later known as Ingilene), but it also stretched further eastwards in the direction of the Batman River (how far precisely is impossible to determine). Perhaps it is more likely to assume the western extension of Arzanene. For Prokopios the western boundary of Arzanene definitely ended on the Batman before the sixth century CE. However, we can infer from the seventh-century-CE *Geography of Ananias of Širak* that after 591 CE the boundary of Arzanene was extended westwards to include the territory in question (especially Np'rkert = the Latin Martyropolis and its surroundings).¹⁶¹ To conclude, the inclusion of the territory between the western Tigris and the Batman under Ingilene or Arzanene is possible, but not straightforward, as any premises for such a solution are either purely theoretical (Ingilene) or much later (Arzanene).

However, if the preposition *metā* is to be understood as a geographically orientated link, then Petros Patrikios' list appears to be well ordered in geographical terms.¹⁶² Namely, its enumeration of countries proceeds from west to east, and Sophene is located between Ingilene and Arzanene, that is, exactly between the western Tigris (Ergani or Dibni) and the Batman River. This solution has however one difficulty: it implies that PP's choice of the term *Sophene* (the territory between the Euphrates and the Tauros at Ergani) is indeed mistaken for *Sophanene* (the country between the western Tigris and the Batman River).¹⁶³ Accepting this solution leads to another very important conclusion—the status of *Sophene proper* was not under discussion at all during the 298 peace talks.¹⁶⁴ If so, the reason must have been that its status was already settled; in other words, Sophene was already under the Roman sphere of influence.¹⁶⁵

Much has been discussed in scholarship about *the relation of the two peace treaties*.

First, some scholars have thought that the two lists have to match up, i.e., the countries gained by the Romans in 298 CE should again be listed among

161 See Hübschmann 1904, 309; Holmes 1923, 420–421; Chaumont 1982, 96; Sinclair 1994–95, 197–198.

162 Blockley 1984, 32; Mosig-Walburg 2009, 138.

163 Weissbach 1927b, 1018 (as an option); Blockley 1984, 32; Mosig-Walburg 2009, 138.

164 Blockley 1984, 32 and n. 24 on p. 42.

165 Blockley 1984, 32; Wheeler 1991, 509; Wheeler 2002, 106; Mosig-Walburg 2009, 136–139.

Roman losses in 363 CE,¹⁶⁶ on the grounds that Shapur II's objective in 363 CE was to regain what had been lost by his grandfather in 298 CE. This objective is believed to be directly expressed in Amm. Marc 17.5.6 (Shapur II's letter to Constantinus from 358 CE) and 25.7.9 (Marcellinus' narrative about Shapur II's aims). This scholarly approach led to the expansion of the number of countries affected by the peace treaties from five to nine including Sophene, Anzitene, Ingilene, Sophanene, Arzanene, Gordyene, Moxoene, Rehimene, and Zabdikene.¹⁶⁷

However, it is clear that the Persian gains in 363 CE reached only as far as Arzanene (as far as the eastern bank of the Tigris is concerned) whose western border most likely fell on the Batman River (see Prokopios, who testifies to the state of affairs in the sixth century, but created mainly by the 363 CE treaty). Therefore, the Persians did not get everything back in 363 CE that had been taken from them in 298 CE, according to Petros Patrikios (FGrHist IV, Fr. 14). Several possible explanations have been offered. First, the Persians' official demands went further than their real expectations; the latter were actually formulated by the Persians as part of the diplomatic game. Second, while the main objective of the peace treaty of 298 CE was to settle the conditions that arose as the result of the hostilities that began in 296 CE,¹⁶⁸ Ingilene and Sophene (if understood as the territory of Sophanene) may have become Roman earlier.¹⁶⁹ Thus, the purpose of the inclusion of Ingilene and Sophene/Sophanene in the 298 CE peace treaty was not to legitimize their possession as new gains but to again put the official seal on their status. Thus, if Shapur II's demands referred

166 Hübschmann 1904, 220, n. 3; Felix 1985, 125; Winter 1989, 555–557.

167 Hübschmann 1904, 220, n. 3; Toumanoff 1963, 166–167, n. 63; Chaumont 1969, 123; Felix 1985, 125; Winter 1989, 555–557. The words of E. Winter 1989, 557 are most symptomatic of this approach: “The number five, given by Ammianus Marcellinus, corresponds with the reality ... while Petros Patrikios, as far as this question is concerned, gives an incorrect recital of the facts.” This scholarly discussion misses the point. The toponyms used by PP may have various meaning in ancient sources. They may denote geopolitical entities, but at times also stand for (mainly) geographical entities, and it is beyond the point to suggest a mistake on the side of Petros in this question. Five geopolitical entities may include nine geographical regions (or perhaps even more, if one wants to be even more detailed. The most detailed list of subdistricts in Sophene can be made on the basis of the medieval *Geography of Ananias Širak*). See, for example, Blockley 1984, who deliberately uses the term *principalities* to avoid the confusion between political and geographical meaning of the toponyms in question.

168 Luther 2006, esp. 216–217.

169 Weissbach 1927b, 1018 (as a possibility); Blockley 1984, 32; Wheeler 1991, 509; Wheeler 2002, 106; Mosig-Walburg 2009, 136–139.

only to the Persian losses from between 296 and 298 CE,¹⁷⁰ then they would have not included Ingilene and Sophanene. Third, it has been suggested that Shapur II decided to regain the territory east of the Batman River, which included the lands being culturally closer to his world,¹⁷¹ (and consequently saw Ingilene and Sophanene as not fulfilling these criteria and being integrated into the Roman world).

At an rate, it must be emphasized that the 363 CE peace treaty, as we know it from the historical sources, neither directly nor compressively addressed the former treaty and consequently cannot be treated as a merely a mechanical reversal of the 298 CE peace treaty.¹⁷² Furthermore, various circumstances “on the ground” (diplomatic game in negotiations, geopolitical considerations over political and cultural ties of the countries) may have also played a role in the final solution in 363 CE. Above all, the text of Ammianus Marcellinus, especially his use of the terms “ut docebat autem” before the introduction of the terms of the 363 CE peace treaty, may suggest a difference between the preliminary and the final Persian demands which eventually became the letter of the peace treaty.

Concerning *the course of the Roman-Sasanian border* from 298 CE, some very specific terms appear in our sources. That is to say, in the second clause of the treaty, Petros Patrikios places the border between Rome and Persia on the Tigris. Likewise, in speaking about Arzanena, Moxoena, Zabdicena, Rehimena and Corduena, Ammianus Marcellinus calls them *Transtigritanae regiones*. Ammianus’ term is very specific. It literally means “regions beyond the Tigris,” which, from the perspective of the Roman province of Mesopotamia, must mean territories on the eastern bank of the Tigris River.

The inclusion of several countries located on the eastern bank of the Tigris (Sophanene, Arzanene, Moxoene, Zabdikene, Rehimene, and Gordyene, but not Sophene proper and Ingilene) and the placement of the border between Rome and Persia on the Tigris appeared to be contractionary to many scholars.¹⁷³ Consequently, it has been suggested that PP’s text expresses two

170 I present here the idea of Mosig-Walburg 2009, 136, but with some modifications. Namely, Mosig-Walburg 2009, 136 speaks of Ingilene and Sophanene as earlier gains, but tentatively dates them either to “vor dem Friedensschluß des Jahres 298” or to the campaign of Galerius.

171 I find a glimmer of this idea in Mosig-Walburg 2009, 138 who refers to Prokopios *Aed.* 3.2.3 saying that the lands east of the Nymphios belonged to Persia for ages.

172 Blockley 1984, 34.

173 E.g. Dillemann 1962, 217; Chaumont 1969, 121–122; Felix 1985, 125–126; Winter 1989, 558.

different states of affairs—*de iure* and *de facto*.¹⁷⁴ Namely, in 298 CE the Romans received from Persia several territories on the eastern bank of the Tigris, but in subsequent years decided not to incorporate them into the Roman Empire. Instead, they left them as semiautonomous regions outside the actual structure of the administration of the Empire, but under some kind of suzerainty. The textual confusion has been attributed to Petros Patrikios, who is believed to have mixed up the text of the treaty (at his disposal) with his own commentary, the latter of which implied his perspective of the sixth century CE. However, it has been noted that the text of PP does not give away any impression of having two such levels; it instead entirely refers to the condition of a very particular historical perspective of the year 298 CE.¹⁷⁵ Consequently, it has been suggested that the first two clauses should not be understood as regulating the same section of the border course. They both refer to the course of the Roman-Persian border but not in one section: the first applies to its more northwestern section, while the second to the section after the first one, more to the southeast.¹⁷⁶ As a result, the Tigris is set as the border between Rome and Persia, but in particular between the Roman province of Mesopotamia and the Persian provinces east of the Tigris (Adiabene and Beth Garmai).¹⁷⁷

The question arises as to the political status and administration of the countries relinquished by the Persians in 298 CE. It is important to note that our sources span a few centuries. Consequently, one has to be aware of some approximation of one picture gleaned from such source material. The most detailed description of the status of the countries in question can be found in the sixth-century-CE Prokopios (*Aed.* 3.1.17–27); in addition to this, several brief references made by Ammianus Marcellinus, Festus, and Zosimos are useful. Additionally, a very brief reference to the status of the gentes also appears in *Cod. Theod.* 12.13.6.

First of all, let us see what *terminology* is used by the sources for the territories in question. Petros Patrikios (FGrHist IV, Fr. 14) uses the toponyms Intelene/Ingilene (Ἰγγιληνή), Sophene (Σωφηνή), Arzanene (Ἀρζανηνή), Zabdikene (Ζαβδικηνή), and one ethnonym—“of the Cordueni” (Καρδοουηνῶν).

174 Dillemann 1962, 217; Felix 1985, 125–126; Winter 1989, 558.

175 Blockley 1984, 31–33; Mosig-Walburg 2009, 147.

176 Weissbach 1923, 1018 (as a distant possibility); Blockley 1984, 31–33; Mosig-Walburg 2009, 147.

177 Another possible solution is given by Chrysos 1993, 175–176 who claims that there can be no contradiction between the borders of the satrapies and the Tigris line because the satrapies did not form an integral part of the Empire.

In turn, Ammianus Marcellinus in the fourth century CE speaks of *gentes Transtigritanae* (Amm. Mar. 18.9.2) or just *Transtigritani* (Amm. 22.7.10). Also in the fourth century Festus uses the term *gentes*, while about a century later (fifth/sixth century CE), Zosimos 3.31.1 employs the same term in Greek—ἔθνη. The term *gentes*/ἔθνη also appears in the Byzantine legislations (Cod. Iust. 1.29.5) to distinguish between the countries in question (which in the sixth century already formed part of the Roman provincial administration) and other Roman provinces in the region.

Ancient sources also use the term *regiones* (Amm. Marc. 25.7.8., 25.7.9., and Fest. 25.3), but the term *provinciae* never appears. It is actually possible that the first term should be understood as implying a deliberate contrast to the second term, which is strikingly absent.¹⁷⁸ Thus, the countries in question were *regiones* and not *provinciae*; that is, they did not become an integral part of the Empire's administration structure. Remarkably, the rulers of the *gentes* were called satraps. Ammianus knows of Iovinianus, "satrapa Corduenae" in the fourth century CE (359 CE); Gaddana, "satrapa Sofanenae" is known from *Cod. Theod.* 12.13.6 dated to 387 CE; in the sixth century Prokopios speaks about the existence of five satraps in the region, but explicitly names only one—Theodoros, the satrap of Sophanene (*Aed.* 3.2.6).

The most detailed description of the political status and domestic administration of the *ethne* comes only from Prokopios, who while writing in the sixth century, clearly speaks about the former political makeup of the *ethne* which, in his view, led to Emperor Justinian I's thorough reforms. According to Prokopios of Caesarea (*Aed.* 3.1.17–27), there were five Armenian satraps east of the Euphrates (unspecified, but in the course of his narrative Prokopios mentions the satraps in Sophanene and Balabitene, the last of which he calls an office of low importance). Their offices were always hereditary and held for life. However, the satraps received their insignia from the Roman Emperor (golden-purple tunic and cloak, and long red-color boots—symbolic of royal power). Prokopios stresses that such an outfit was otherwise allowed only for the Roman emperor and the Persian king. The satraps also had their own Armenian troops (but never the Roman legions) at their disposal, and conducted their wars independently.

Prokopios also mentions that during the reign of Emperor Zeno (474–475, 476–491 CE), several satraps took part in the revolt (484–488 CE) that led to their removal (except for the satrap in Balabitene) and the placement of new men in their offices. The offices also ceased to be held for life and hereditary. It

¹⁷⁸ Mosig-Walburg 2009, 141.

appears that no other substantial changes took place in the internal or external organization of the satrapies.¹⁷⁹

Prokopios' reference to the military issues led to some disagreement among scholars. While some scholars understand his description as excluding the presence of Roman "boots on the ground" in the *regiones Transtigritanae*,¹⁸⁰ others do not see Prokopios' words as really implying such far-reaching conclusions.¹⁸¹ On the contrary, it appears that Prokopios' text explicitly refers only to the command of the Roman troops (which, to stress again, never served under the command of the satraps) and not to their presence in the *regiones Transtigritanae*. Such troops may have been present there, but not under the command of the satraps. In fact, it appears that Ammianus' statement about 15 *castella* to be handed over to the Persians may exactly refer to the territory of the *Transtigritani*.¹⁸² Furthermore, the fact that Notitia Dignitatum mentions *legiones pseudocomitatenses Transtigritani* (Not. Dig. Or. 7.48.58), *equites sagittarii Cordueni* (Not. Dig. Oc. 6.40.83), *ala XV Flavia Carduenorum* with *cohors XIV Valeria Zabdenorum Maiocariri* (Not. Dig. Or. 36.34.36) indicates that the territory of the *Transtigritani* became subject to the recruitment of Roman troops.¹⁸³ Finally, archaeological evidence, especially from Amida, Hasankeyf, Çattepe/Tilli, and Bezabde suggests the presence of Roman troops (especially *legio VI Parthica* in Hasankeyf, and *legio II Parthica* with *equites sagittarii Cordueni* in Bezabde in AD 360, see *Amm. Marc.* 20.7.1.) in this area. Such troops, to conform to Prokopios' testimony, must have had a sort of extraterritorial immunity, i.e., they were not under the command of the satraps but directly functioned under Roman orders.¹⁸⁴

Concerning taxation, there are only two brief references in ancient sources that enable us to get any insight into this issue. First, in the sixth century CE Prokopios writes that the inhabitants of Martyropolis passed the amount of the two-years' taxes, likely leveled on the whole population (φόροι δημόσιοι),¹⁸⁵ to the Persians who took control of the city. This statement may be under-

179 Güterbock 1900, 39; Preiser-Kapeller 2001, 44.

180 E.g. Güterbock 1900, 36; Mosig-Walburg 2009, 142.

181 Preiser-Kapeller 2001, 41.

182 Ensslin 1942, 81; Garsoïan 1998, 259; Chrysos 1993, 176; Preiser-Kapeller 2001, 38. This option seems to result from the syntax of Ammianus' text (Chrysos 1993, 176). Other suggested options were that the *castella* were located in Mesopotamia (Dillemann 1962, 219–220) or only in Gordyene (Honigsmann 1935, 5–6; Toumanoff 1963, 181, n. 142).

183 See the edition of Seeck 1876. For the interpretation, see Güterbock 1900, 36–37; Garsoïan 1998, 259; Comfort 2009, 228, 319.

184 Chrysos 1993, 176.

185 Preiser-Kapeller 2001, 44.

stood as indirect proof of the existence of Roman taxation in the region. The duty normally collected by the inhabitants for Rome was handed over to the Persians this time.¹⁸⁶ Second, *Codex Theodosianus* preserves the decree, dated to 14 June 387 CE, which demands that Gaddana the satrap of Sophanene return the crown gold (*aurum coronarium*) to those from whom it was illegally taken away and to provide for the crown gold from his own resources, as was customary for all satraps. This episode has been interpreted in two contradictory ways: some scholars assumed that the existence of such tribute (paid implicitly only on occasions, e.g. throne accession, reign jubilees, military triumphs) on the side of satraps excludes the existence of other regular taxes,¹⁸⁷ while for other scholars, the 387 CE decree is the very proof of the existence of Rome's tax jurisdiction in the *Transtigritanae regiones*.¹⁸⁸

In speaking of *Iovinianus*, the satrap of Corduena, Ammianus 18.6.20 recalls that *Iovinianus* once lived in Rome as a hostage. This detail is highly revealing in two ways. First, it shows that the Romans apparently used the tactics of hostages of members of local elites in the *Transtigritanae regiones* as a means to ensure the loyalty of their countries.¹⁸⁹ This policy was also meant to forge close ties between the local elites and the Romans, especially in the sense of the Romanization of the former. Second, this detail also confirms Prokopios' information (from the sixth century CE) about the hereditary status of local satraps in the fourth century CE: it was customary to send only members of local elites and royal families to Rome as hostages. *Iovinianus* must have been first such a hostage in Rome before he inherited his office in Gordyene from his ancestors.¹⁹⁰

Given the aforementioned detail about securing Rome's influence in the *Transtigritanae regiones*, it is remarkable that Ammianus also mentions (21.6.7) sending rich gifts by Constantius II to the satraps on the eve of the Persian invasion of Shapur II (along with an entreaty not to join the Persian king). This episode in turn demonstrates that the political equilibrium in the region was far from being settled and that the Romans had to use, so to speak, a "carrot and stick approach" in the region.

186 Garsoïan 1998, 259.

187 Preiser-Kapeller 2001, 42–43; Mosig-Walburg 2009.

188 Garsoïan 1998, 259. For Winter 1989, 560 this text proves that the satrapies "were part of the Imperial central administration."

189 For the Roman policy of royal hostages see Dąbrowa 1987, 63–71 and Strothmann 2012, 83–102 (concerning the Parthians), as well as A.D. Lee 1991, 366–374, esp. 371–372 (as for the Sasanian period).

190 Mosig-Walburg 2009, 142.

All in all, concerning the political status and domestic administration, it appears that the upper Tigris territories had a special status. In terms of population, the territories were inhabited by local peoples who were ethnically distinctive.¹⁹¹ Although they were characterized as Armenian (see Proc. Aed. 3.2.1.-3.2.2., 3.1.16–17), they were also clearly distinguished from those living in Greater Armenia (see *Leg. Nov.* 31.1.3). In political terms, the territories found themselves under Roman suzerainty from 298 CE on, but were clearly not incorporated into the Roman Empire prior to the sixth century CE.¹⁹² This status can also be concluded from a brief reference to the peace treaty of 298 by Festus in the fourth century CE, who says that the Romans had *dicio* over the five *gentes*. It has rightly been observed that *dicio* does not equal *dominium*; consequently, the countries in question found themselves under some kind of Roman suzerainty, but did not become part of the Roman Empire.¹⁹³ How can we, then, approximately describe their status?

According to N. Garsoïan, the satrapies had the status of *civitates foederatae* before 485 CE (the rebellion against Emperor Zeno), and that of (only) *civitates stipendiariae* afterwards.¹⁹⁴ According to the former status, the satraps “were acknowledged complete masters in their own territory, were free from taxation, did not have a Roman governor, and did not maintain a Roman garrison. The main obligation binding them to the Empire was that of furnishing armed contingents and in general rendering military aid to the Empire.”¹⁹⁵ By contrast, the status *civitates stipendiariae* was characterized by the loss of the previous privileges and the introduction of taxation and imperial officials.¹⁹⁶

In turn, J. Preiser-Kapeller stresses that the satrapies were in the position of an alliance known in the Roman law as “foedus iniquum.”¹⁹⁷ Such an “unequal alliance” meant that Rome’s ally lost the legal position of a sovereign state (especially in relation to third states) and it imposed obligations only on Rome’s ally to respect the supremacy of Rome and to serve under Roman command in offensive wars.¹⁹⁸

As the aforementioned terminology does not explicitly appear in our sources, the status of the satrapies is also described in most general terms as that

191 Likewise (to some extent) Winter 1989, 561; Mosig-Walburg 2009, 141–148.

192 See Mosig-Walburg 2009, 141–147, esp. 145.

193 Chrysos 1993, 175; Mosig-Walburg 2009, 144.

194 Garsoïan 1997b, 104.

195 Adontz, Garsoïan 1970, 85.

196 Garsoïan 1997b, 104.

197 Preiser-Kapeller 2001, 37.

198 Zhou 1994, 137.

of one of *Roman cliental/friendly states*.¹⁹⁹ This expresses a political status where the main aspects of the civil and military life are left untouched, and the main restrictions concern foreign policy. At the same time, the sovereign may always step in and decide on some issues even within the domestic sphere (e.g. intervention against Gaddana's way of collecting the resources for *aurum coronarium*).²⁰⁰

3.6 *Transtigritani* in the Light of Armenian Sources

Some information about the *Transtigritanae regiones* can be gleaned from Armenian sources. The main sources in question are the *Epic Histories*, Moses Khorenats'i's *History of the Armenians*, and Agat'angelos.

There are many examples of rulers of the *Transtigritani* taking part in Pan-Armenian national events, usually initiated and supervised by the Armenian kings, concern religious events. In particular, this refers to inaugurations and burials of several well-known religious figures traditionally seen as the founding fathers of the Armenian Church, including the patriarchs Gregory, Aristakes, Yusik I, and Nerses, as well as two disciples of patriarch Daniel: Šalita and Epip'an. Furthermore, these national saints are depicted as not only being in contact with rulers of the *Transtigritani* but also preaching in the *Transtigritanae regiones*.

Let us give some examples. Agat'angelos (Aa 795=Ag 135)²⁰¹ presents the inauguration of Gregory the Illuminator, the first patriarch of Armenia, as a great national assembly ordered by Tiridates IV, king of Armenia (298–330 CE). All Armenian rulers were ordered by the king to participate, including several anonymous rulers of the *Transtigritani*: the prince of Ingilene (Angł); the prince of Arzanene (Ałjnik'), who held the office of the great *bdeašx*, the prince of Korduk', the prince of Cop'k', and the prince of Mokk'. Likewise, in

199 A few exemplary names are in order: Adontz, Garsoïan 1970, 25 and Winter 1989, 560: "autonomous principalities—*satrapiae*"; Preiser-Kapeller 2001, 41: "autonome Klienteireiche"; Mosig-Walburg 2009, 141–147, esp. 145: "rechtlich dem römischen Reich zugerechnet, jedoch nicht als unmittelbares Reichsgebiet betrachtet, standen sie außerhalb der römischen Provinzialverwaltung und organisierten eigenständig ihre zivile wie auch ihre Militärverwaltung."

200 The label of client states has been objected to by Ensslin 1942, 81–82 who claims that, first, "hatte man die Satrapien als unmittelbaren Reichsteil gefaßt" (because of *Sophanene* in the *Laterculus* dated to 448–449 AD) and, second, "die Satrapen waren römische Beamte geworden".

201 Aa 795, Thomson 1976, 333–335.

describing the journey of the Armenian king Tiridates IV to Rome (to celebrate the change of Roman policy towards Christianity), Agat'angelos (*Aa* 873)²⁰² mentions that Tiridates IV was accompanied by, among others, his princes of Ingilene (Angl') and Moxoene (Mokk'). These rulers are clearly presented as acting on order of the Armenian king and as his subordinates; in fact, mainly as chief commanders of his army.

According to BP 3.2,²⁰³ Aristakes (son and successor of St. Gregory Illuminator) was active in Cop'k' until his death (dated to ca. 327 CE).²⁰⁴ In turn, in describing the consecration of the patriarch Yusik (Yusik I, grandson of St. Gregory the Illuminator²⁰⁵) during the reign of the Armenian king Tiran (ca. 338–350 CE²⁰⁶), BP 3.12²⁰⁷ mentions many Armenian princes attending the event: Vałarš from Anjit, Zareh from Sophanene (Cop'k'), Varaz from Sophene (Cop'k' Šahuni), and Gnit' from Asthianene (Hašteank'). Likewise, the consecration of Nerses as the patriarch of Armenia (ca. 353–373 CE)²⁰⁸ was attended, according to BP 4.4, by Prince Daniel of Cop'k' and Noy, prince of the Other Cop'k'.²⁰⁹ Accordingly, Sophanene (Cop'k') became the scene of St. Nerses' (ca. 353–373 CE²¹⁰) vivid missionary activity (BP 4.14).²¹¹ Furthermore, two disciples of St. Daniel, Šahita and Epip'an, were active, according to BP 3.14,²¹² in Gordyene (Korduk') and Sophanene (Great Cop'k') with Arzanene (Aljnik'), respectively. Indeed, the *Epic Histories* (BP 5.27–28²¹³) report many episodes concerning Epip'an's activity in Sophanene, especially located along the northern stretches of the Batman River (Mamušeł).²¹⁴ Similarly, according to BP 4.15, the appointment of a certain Č'unak²¹⁵ as the patriarch of Armenia (during the exile of St. Nerses) by Shapur II, king of Persia (and Aršak II, king of Armenia:

202 Thomson 1976, 407–409.

203 Garsoïan 1989, 67.

204 Concerning St. Aristakes, see Garsoïan 1989, 351; Terian 2005, 132, n. 5.

205 Garsoïan 1989, 431–432.

206 Garsoïan 1997, 94; Preiser-Kapeller 2001, 38.

207 Garsoïan 1989, 82.

208 Garsoïan 1989, 395–396; Preiser-Kapeller 2001, 38.

209 Garsoïan 1989, 111.

210 Garsoïan 1989, 395–396; Preiser-Kapeller 2001, 38.

211 Garsoïan 1989, 139.

212 Garsoïan 1989, 90.

213 Garsoïan 1989, 206–207.

214 For St. Epip'an, see Garsoïan 1989, 370.

215 In fact, Č'unak is not a proper name, but a pejorative epithet that means "a man who has nothing." See Garsoïan 1989, 366.

350-ca. 364/367 CE²¹⁶) was attended by anonymous bishops from Arzanene (Ałjnik') and Gordyene (Korduk').

What is more, the Armenian sources also mention a few remarkable episodes that belong to the political history of the region at large.

In describing a remarkable episode of the Armenian court life (when the eunuch Drastamat rose to prominence and was given the role of the chief prince of Armenia in the time of King Tiran (ca. 338–350 CE²¹⁷) and his son Aršak (Aršak II: 350-ca. 364/367 CE²¹⁸)), BP 5.7²¹⁹ mentions in passing the fact that the treasuries of the king of Greater Armenia were stored, among other places, in the fortress of Angl in Ingilene (and governed by the royal officer called *mardpet*²²⁰) and in the fortress of Bnabeł in the land of Cop'k'. Likewise, in referring to the Persian raids against Greater Armenia in the time of the Armenian king, Aršak II (350-ca. 364/367 CE²²¹), BP 4.23 has the Armenian King foraging for supplies in Ingilene (Angełtun) and so being unable to come to face the invaders. A similar episode can be found in MX 3.9,²²² which tells us of the invasion of Caucasian tribes upon northern Armenia in the time of King Khusro (III or the Small, ca. 330–338 CE²²³). Only the eastern and western Armenian armies faced the invasion, because the southern forces remained with King Khusro III in the land of Cop'k'.

BP 3.9²²⁴ reports the revolt of the ruler of Arzanene (Ałjnik') Bakur against the king of Armenia, Khusro (Khusro III, 330–338 CE²²⁵) in ca. 335 CE.²²⁶ Armenian forces that put down the revolt consisted of contingents from several Armenian regions, including from Gordyene (Korduk') under Prince Ĵon, from Sophanene (Great Cop'k') under Prince Mar, from Sophene (Cop'k' Šahēi) under Prince Nerseh, and from Asthianene (Hašteank') under Prince Dat.

216 Garsoian 1997, 94; Preiser-Kapeller 2001, 38.

217 Garsoian 1997, 94; Preiser-Kapeller 2001, 38.

218 Garsoian 1997, 94; Preiser-Kapeller 2001, 38.

219 Garsoian 1989, 198.

220 Garsoian 1989, 441, 542–543.

221 Garsoian 1997, 94.

222 Thomson 2006a, 258–259.

223 Garsoian 1997, 94.

224 Garsoian 1989, 76–77.

225 Garsoian 1997, 94.

226 Garsoian 1989, 363–364; Preiser-Kapeller 2001, 41, n. 117; Lightfoot 2005, 496.

BP 4.50²²⁷ appears to refer to the events after Emperor Julian's defeat in 363 CE, especially to the Persian takeover in the region.²²⁸ In the view of BP 4.50,²²⁹ the rulers (*bdeašxk'*) of Aljnik' and Kordik' left Armenia under King Aršak II and joined Persia, while the lands of Anjit (under Prince Sałamut) and Great Cop'k' went over to the Roman side. These acts are depicted by the narrator as acts of treason against the Armenian king.

Likewise, BP 5.9–10 and BP 5.17–20²³⁰ tell us that during a brief period of restoration of the Armenian kingdom under King Pap (ca. 368–374 CE), the Armenian *sparapet*, Mušel Mamikonean, subjugated the rebelled regions: Korduk', Aljnik', Great Cop'k', Angełtun, and Anjit. All these regions were again forced into submission and forced to pay tribute to the Armenian crown.

To sum up, Armenian sources referring to the fourth-century-CE realities in the region treat various rulers of the *Transtigritani* as members of the Armenian kingdom, i.e., as theoretically subordinates to the Armenian king and as active in political, social and religious affairs of the Armenian Commonwealth. What kind of specific information can be gleaned from the Armenian sources?

First, the Armenian sources mention some rulers of the *Transtigritani*, and these figures can usually be placed in a general chronological context through analysis of other events and figures in the narrative. Second, Armenian sources refer to the political status of the *Transtigritani* in relation to Armenia, Rome, and Persia. Third, they shed some light on religious developments in the region (spread of Christianity).

Concerning the rulers of the *Transtigritani*, most of them appear in our sources without their names being explicitly mentioned. However, there are several exceptions.

From BP 3.12, we know of Varaz from Sophene (Cop'k' Šahuni), Zareh from Sophanene (Cop'k'), Vałarš from Anzitene (Anjit), and Gnit' from Asthianene (Hašteank') taking part in the consecration of Yusik (Yusik I, grandson of St. Gregory the Illuminator). According to MX 3.11, Yusik I was consecrated in the fourth year of the reign of king Tiran and lasted six years. If Tiran's reign can be dated to 338–350 CE,²³¹ this means that Yusik I's pontificate took place between 341 and 347 CE.²³² Thus, the year 341 CE can be seen as a reference point for the reign of several rulers of the *Transtigritani*.

²²⁷ Garsoian 1989, 167.

²²⁸ Garsoian 1989, 299, n. 3; Preiser-Kapeller 2001, 40.

²²⁹ Garsoian 1989, 167.

²³⁰ Garsoian 1989, 200–202.

²³¹ Garsoian 1997, 94; Preiser-Kapeller 2001, 38.

²³² Garsoian 1997, 94.

Likewise, Prince Daniel of Sophanene (Cop'k') and Noy, prince of Sophene (the Other Cop'k'), attended the consecration of Nerses as the patriarch of Armenia (BP 4.4).²³³ The chronology of the pontificate of Nerses is complicated; few relatively secured dates can be ascertained. They include Nerses' embassy to Byzantium in 358 CE (known both from AM 12.5.1–2 and the Constantinopolitan records—MGH, AA, IX, p. 239) and the coincidence of Nerses' pontificate and the reign of the Armenian king Pap King (ca. 368–374 CE). It appears that Nerses' pontificate can tentatively be dated to between 353 and 373 CE.²³⁴ Thus, the tentative date of 353 CE in particular (and the 350s in general) sets the chronological context for the reign of Prince Noy in Sophene and of Prince Daniel in Sophanene.

Furthermore, Ĵon from Gordyene (Korduk'), Mar from Sophanene (Great Cop'k'), Nerseh from Sophene (Cop'k' Šahēi), and Dat from Asthianene (Hašteank') are known by name as participants in the coalition against the pro-Persian coup d'état in Arzanene led by its local ruler Bakur (BP 3.9). This rebellion is reported to have taken place during the reign of Khusro (Khusro III), whose reign is dated to 330–338 CE.²³⁵ Therefore, the period between 330 and 338 CE is the most general setting for the rule of the aforementioned princes, while the tentative year 335 CE, suggested by many scholars on the account of its proximity to the peak of the Roman-Sasanian hostilities in 336 CE,²³⁶ can be seen as a probable date.

Lastly, Salamut from Anjit is the only ruler of the *Transtigritani* mentioned by name in the context of the Persian takeover in the region after Emperor Julian's defeat in 363 CE (BP 4.50). Thus, the reign of Salamut in Anjit can be dated to 363 CE.

To sum up, the following rulers are attested in the Armenian sources:

- Varaz in Sophene (Cop'k' Šahuni), Zareh in Sophanene (Cop'k'), Vałarš in Anzitene (Anjit), Gnit' in Asthianene (Hašteank') in ca. 341 CE;
- Nerseh from Sophene (Cop'k' Šahēi), Dat from Asthianene (Hašteank'), Mar from Sophanene (Great Cop'k'), Ĵon from Gordyene (Korduk') between 330 and 338 CE, probably 335 CE;
- Noy in Sophene (the Other Cop'k') and Daniel in Sophanene (Cop'k') in ca. 353 CE, Salamut in Anzitene in 363 CE and shortly afterwards.

²³³ Garsoïan 1989, 111.

²³⁴ Garsoïan 1989, 395–396; Preiser-Kapeller 2001, 38.

²³⁵ Garsoïan 1997, 94.

²³⁶ Garsoïan 1989, 363–364; Preiser-Kapeller 2001, 41, n. 117; Lightfoot 2005, 496.

Generally speaking, the rulers of the Transtigritani are presented in our sources as local *princes* (by the use of interchangeable terms, [sing.]: *tēr*, *iškhan*, *nakharar*).²³⁷ There are, however, a few notable exceptions.

Most importantly, the rulers of Arzanene and Gordyene are attributed more important titles and offices than the rest of the rulers of the *Transtigritani*. That is to say, the ruler of Arzanene is presented as the most important *bdeašx* (out of the, possibly, four others²³⁸) by both the *Epic Histories* (BP 3.9) and Agat'angelos (Aa 795). Likewise, the ruler of Korduk' is termed *bdeašx* by Agat'angelos (Vg 98, Va 86).²³⁹ The title *bdeašx* in Armenian sources appears to denote one of the highest Armenian court titles ("precedence over all other magnates"). Such a ruler, probably hereditary, was in charge of the defense of a frontier land ("marcher-lords").²⁴⁰

237 Garsoïan 1989, 533. The princes of Ingilene do not appear in BP, but they are known to other Armenian sources (Agat'angelos, Sebeos, MX). See Garsoïan 1989, 441.

238 The question of the Armenian *vitaxates* must be touched upon here. The reconstruction of the system of Armenian *vitaxates* presented by some scholars, most recently by Hewsen 1988–89 (see the older literature quoted there) should not be followed in the reconstruction of the history of the *Transtigritani* for two reasons. First, it is a highly theoretical reconstruction. Namely, none of the four laconic mentions of the *vitaxates* (Aa 795, Aa 873, BP 3.9 and 4.50) really agrees with another (three lists gives only nine toponyms [Aa795: vitaxates of Aljnik', Gugark'; As 873: vitaxates of Aruastan, Mask'ut'k', Norširakan, Asorestan; BP: vitaxates of Aljnik', Gugark', Norširakan] and leave three lacunas in total). Further, it is based on a number of speculations. For instance, the idea of the Armenian *vitaxate*, i.e., "the Armenian border province," denotes a territory under rule of a *vitaxata* (e.g. Arzanene = *Aljnik'*) facing a non-Armenian country (in this case, Aruastan = the Nisibis region). Thus, the very concept of the *vitaxas* implies that we in fact have two different geopolitical entities: the Armenian border province and the country located outside Armenia's borders. By contrast, due to the lack of compatibility of lists, Hewsen must assume that the same *bdeašx* sometimes appears under the name of *his own country* (*vitaxa of Aljnik'*) but sometimes under the name of *a foreign country* (Aruastan) from which he is supposed to defend Armenia. This assumption is not straightforward, and, at face value, appears to be contradictory. Second, if the picture of the Pan-Armenian unity in the fourth century CE does not agree with historical realities on the ground, the less so does the idea of the existence of a well-organized system of subordinate rulers leading a territorial defense of the Armenian kingdom. Consequently, the construct of the four *vitaxates* of Armenia has relevance only for the understanding of the Armenian tradition and has no value for the political history of Northern Mesopotamia in the fourth century CE.

239 According to Garsoïan 1989, the prince of Korduk' was also called *sahmanapah* of the marches of Asorestan in Aa 873. But this is true only provided that there is a connection between *Asorestan* and Korduk'.

240 See Garsoïan 1989, 516–517.

In turn, the princes of Anzitene are said by BP 3.12 and 4.3 to have held the hereditary office of *hazarapet* (before they lost it to the Gnuni family from the Ayrarat region in the middle of the fourth century CE). The nature of this Armenian office is hard to pin down, but, generally speaking, it appears to be one of chief civil offices in Arsacid Armenia, possibly developing towards a kind of the grand-vizir, prime minister office.²⁴¹

However, it should be stressed that the picture of rulers of the *Transtigritani* as loyal members of the Armenian kingdom and their countries as integral parts of Armenia is *essentially* in contradiction to what we known from Roman sources, especially to the fact of the submission of the satraps to the Roman emperor and to several geopolitical developments in the region.²⁴² Let us give several examples.

The assumption that the rulers of the *Transtigritani* were strictly following the orders of Tiridates IV (298–330 CE) is contradictory to the political situation created by the Roman-Persian peace treaty in 298 CE. After the 298 CE peace treaty, the rulers of the *regiones Transtigritanae* cannot be simply seen as subordinates of King Tiridates IV; in contrast, they were local semi-independent rulers who had to heed orders from Rome. What is more, at that time Rome's official policy in religious matters was anti-Christian until 311 CE. It is hardly possible to imagine Diocletian's appointees (which the rulers of the *Transtigritani* became from 298 CE) as spreading Christianity in their territories before 311 CE.²⁴³

The complaint of BP 4.50 that princes of Anzitene (Anjit) and Sophanene (Great Cop'k') betrayed the Armenian crown by going over to the Romans (in the wake of Julian's defeat in 363 CE) is at least overdue, as both lands had been

241 As far as Asthianene is concerned, according to Moses Khorenats'i, it was ruled by the Kaminakan dynasty which was a branch of the Armenian Arsacid royal house. See Garsoïan 1989, 468.

242 Some scholars try to reconcile the submission of the satraps to Rome and at the same time to Armenia by arguing that the Armenian king was himself subdued to Rome and consequently there could be no conflict of interests between the satraps' loyalty towards Rome and Artaxata. See Garsoïan 1971, 341–352 (especially 344–345); Sinclair 1989, 368; Kettenhofen 1995a, 163 (but with a limitation: "auch wenn Konformität in Religionsdingen nicht primär vom Klientelkönig gefordert war"); Preiser-Kapeller 2001, 38–39; Hewsen 2002b, 130, 132. This is, however, objected to by other scholars who rightly point to the political unpracticality of such arrangement. See Ensslin 1942, 79–80; Mosig-Walburg 2009, 130–134.

243 This problem can, of course, be alleviated if the traditional dating of the official introduction of Christianity in Greater Armenia is corrected from 301 CE to 313 or 314 CE. For the new dating, see Kettenhofen 2000; Kettenhofen 2002.

firmly under Roman influence at least since 298 CE, if not earlier (in the case of Anzitene).

The idea that royal treasures of the king of Greater Armenia were located in the heart of territories of Ingilene and Sophanene is bizarre and hardly agreeable with historical realities. For example, the satraps had their own armies and expenses to cover, in addition to other fiscal responsibilities towards Rome. Placing royal treasuries at the hands of highly autonomous rulers would have been highly risky, to say the least.

The idea that the rulers of the *Transtigritani* laid their own armies at the disposal of the king of Greater Armenia is implicitly contradicted by Prokopios' testimony (who while writing in the sixth century refers to the earlier times), which indicates that these rulers conducted their wars independently.

What is more, the traditional picture of religious unity between Greater Armenia and the *regiones Transtigritanae* gained from Armenian historiography also evokes certain reservations, as it is not easily agreeable with historical realities emerging from non-Armenian sources, especially with traces of influence of Syriac-speaking Christianity in the *Transtigritanae regiones* (see above).

To conclude, while some details about the historical background of the *Transtigritani* as revealed through Armenian sources may not be without significance, it should be stressed that the tendency of the Armenian sources to present the unity of Armenian lands (including the connection of the *Transtigritani* with Greater Armenia) in the fourth century CE is rather an example of wishful thinking on the side of later Armenian writers.

3.7 List of Rulers of Sophene

3.7.1 *Sophene as Monarchy*

The following rulers of Sophene are attested as kings of Sophene:

- *Samos*, attested for ca. the middle of the third century BCE

King of Sophene and Kommagene, attested around the middle of the third century BCE through Kommagene epigraphic data and numismatic evidence.

- *Arsames*, attested in ca. 227 BCE

King of Sophene and Kommagene; mentioned by Polyainos 4.17, attested through the epigraphic evidence from Kommagene; the founder of the capital Arsamosata in Sophene.

- *Xerxes*, attested in ca. 212 BCE

King of Sophene and Kommagene; mentioned by Polybios 8.23, attested through numismatic evidence; married to Antiochos III's sister, Antiochis.

- *Zariadres*, attested in ca. 188 BCE

A Seleucid satrap and since 188 BCE King of Sophene; mentioned by *Geog.* 11.14.5, attested through the Aramaic inscriptions from Armenia (near Lake Sevan, Zanguezour [Siwnik'], Teghut).

- *Mithrobouzanēs*, attested in the period between 188 BCE and 163 BCE

King of Sophene and son of Zariadres, mentioned by Diod. 31.22.

- *Arkathias*, tentatively second half of the second century BCE (that is, after Mithrobouzanēs and before Arsakes/Artanes)

King Arkathias is attested only through numismatic evidence. It has been suggested that stylistic feature of his coinage are very close to those on the coins of Xerxes.²⁴⁴ However, the same phenomenon has been postulated for the coinage of Abdissar, who was proven to not be the king of Sophene. The present study refrains from dating based solely on stylistic features of coins due to the preliminary state of the current research. It appears more likely to assume that Xerxes was immediately followed by Zariadres because of the chronological connection with Antiochos III: the former was assassinated on the order of Antiochos III and the latter was his appointee (first as the satrap). It also seems likely that Mithrobouzanēs followed Zariadres directly on the throne of Sophene due to the chronological connection of the two rulers with Artaxias from Greater Armenia. Zariadres began his rule in agreement with Artaxias, and Mithrobouzanēs' rule was challenged by Artaxias, who was still alive at the time. Given the aforementioned premises and the lack of other hints in the current state of research, the present study also ties Arkathias with the second half of the second century BC because of the lack of other rulers between Mithrobouzanēs and Arsakes.

- Arsakes [or Artanes], attested in 95 BCE when his reign ended

244 Nercessian 1995, 52.

King of Sophene, last member of the Zariadres dynasty; mentioned by Stephen of Byzantium and *Geog.* 11.14.15 (as Artanes), attested through numismatic evidence (for the name Arsakes).

- *Tigranes*, known as Tigranes the Younger, in 66 BCE

Tigranes was appointed as king of Sophene by the Romans, and his suzerainty was acknowledged in several fortresses throughout Sophene. He was, however, quickly deposed by the Romans, probably within several days or weeks after his appointment (Cass. Dio 36.53, Plutarch, *Pomp.* 33, and Appian, *Mith.* 105).

- *Sohaemus*, attested in ca. 54 CE

King of Emesa as of 54 CE, appointed as king of Sophene by Emperor Nero in ca. 54 CE (Tac. *Ann.* 13.7), his appointment lasted no longer than until 60 CE, after which he is still attested as king of Emesa.

3.7.2 *Local Rulers in the Region of Sophene from the Fourth Until Sixth Centuries CE*

A number of local rulers of the *Transtigritani* appear in Armenian sources in the context of Armenian national events in the fourth century CE. What is more, on several occasions we also hear of local rulers in the *Transtigritanae regiones* in the Classical sources.

Circa 341 CE—the following local rulers are mentioned on the occasion of the consecration of Yusik I, grandson of St. Gregory the Illuminator (BP 3.12):

- Varaz in Sophene (Cop'k' Šahuni),
- Zareh in Sophanene (Cop'k'),
- Vałarš in Anzitene (Anjit),
- Gnit' in Asthianene (Hašteank').

Circa 353 CE—the following local rulers are mentioned as attending the consecration of Nerses as the patriarch of Armenia (BP 4.4):

- Noy in Sophene (the Other Cop'k'),
- Daniel in Sophanene (Cop'k').

Between 330 and 338 CE, probably 335 CE—the following local rulers are mentioned in the context of Bakur's pro-Persian rebellion in Arzanene (BP 3.9):

- Bakur in Arzanene (Aljnik'),
- Nerseh from Sophene (Cop'k' Šahēi),
- Dat from Asthianene (Hašteank'),
- Mar from Sophanene (Great Cop'k'),
- Ĵon from Gordyene (Korduk').

Circa 359 CE—Ammianus' scouting mission to the region (Amm. 18.6.20):

- Iovinianus, satrap of Gordyene

363 CE or immediately afterwards—the Persian takeover of much of the *Transtigritanae regiones* (BP 4.50)

- Sałamut from Anzitene (Anjit)

387 CE—*Cod. Theod.* 12.13.6

- Gaddana, satrap of Sophanene

502–503 CE—the Persian invasion under king Kavādh I (Proc. Aed. 3.2.1–9)

- Theodoros, satrap of Sophanene

3.8 Summary and Conclusions

Despite many gaps in our knowledge, the Hellenistic age remains one of the better-known periods in the history of Sophene. Generally speaking, it appears that the kingdom of Sophene emerged onto the political scene in the context of both the Seleucids' gradual loss of influence in the Near East and the separation of the Orontid royal dynasty into local lines around the middle of the third century BCE. Three rulers, Samos, Arsames and Xerxes, belonged to a separate Orontid dynasty which ruled west of Greater Armenia (possibly from Kommagene to Arzanene) before the assumption of power in Syria by the powerful King Antiochos III.

The reign of Antiochos III in Syria brought about a brief period of consolidation of the Seleucid kingdom. Antiochos III disposed of previous Orontid rulers in Sophene with Kommagene (Xerxes) and Greater Armenia (Orontid III), and appointed new rulers who, however, belonged to the local elite akin

to the Orontids (Zariadres and Artaxias). Zariadres and his son Artaxias were appointed as Seleucid satraps of Sophene (with Kommagene) and Greater Armenia, respectively. The peace of Apamea put an end to Antiochos III's ambitious undertaking in 188 BCE and brought about a revival of independence for the kings of Sophene (without Kommagene) and Greater Armenia.

With Zariadres a new Orontid dynasty came to the rule in Sophene. We know of three Zariadres' successors: Mithrobouzanēs, Arkathias, and Arsakes. Remarkably, after the death of Zariadres, his son Artaxias from Greater Armenia apparently raised his succession rights (primogeniture) to his father's dominion over the younger royalty ruling in Sophene and attempted to seize Sophene. However, the diplomatic (and possibly dynastic) connection between Sophene and Kappadokia helped Sophene remain on the political scene as a separate kingdom.

The far-fetched political ambitions of the rulers of Greater Armenia were realized only with the reign of Tigranes II, who effectively put an end to the rule of the Zariadres dynasty in Sophene in 95 BCE. Remarkably, the Romans, who in turn put a stop to Tigranes II's conquests in the Near East (the Third Mithridatic War), attempted to revive the traditional separation between Sophene and Greater Armenia in 66 BCE, this time with the younger line in Sophene (Tigranes the Younger) and the older line (Tigranes II) in Greater Armenia. The end of a momentary reign of Tigranes the Younger likely meant the end of a permanent independence of the kingdom of Sophene.

It has been debated whether after 66 BCE Sophene reverted to Greater Armenia or perhaps became attached to Kappadokia (or to Rome through Kappadokia, see Appian's testimony). Although a clear-cut solution to this problem is not evident due to the lack of sources, it should be noted that the situation may have been more fluid than perhaps is often assumed from the perspective of the (relative) constancy of modern borders. That is to say, in ancient times, Greater Armenia was a decentralized state and did not account for political, cultural, or religious unity (as is wishfully seen in retrospect by the Armenian national historiography). In turn, when it comes to the Roman (and Kappadokian) influence in the area, the status of Sophene may tentatively be compared with the political status of Osrhoene. The latter cannot be really described, with one formula encompassing even the period between the start of Rome's serious involvement in the region in 114 CE and Osrhoene's incorporation by Rome in 195 CE. Even within this relatively short period, the history of Osrhoene's relations with Rome varied from independence to various forms of submission. In this light, it may not be incorrect to see Sophene as a region with its own local elites who, depending on the political situation in the region,

leaned more towards Rome, Greater Armenia, or Parthia, or perhaps enjoyed brief periods of autonomy.²⁴⁵

In fact, from 66/65 BCE on, the history of Sophene may be illuminated only through separate episodes revealed in ancient sources.

In ca. 54 CE, Emperor Nero assigned the district of Sophene to the king of Emesa, Sohaemus. This episode suggests that Sophene lay within the Roman sphere of influence at that time and was probably administered by the governor of Cappadocia. This is also likely given Appian's testimony and the recent establishment (14 CE) of the Roman province of Cappadocia. Sohaemus' appointment bears all the hallmarks of the Roman policy of emergency appointments for short-term purposes (especially to gather military support). Sohaemus' reign lasted no longer than 60 CE. It appears that in light of the Rhandeia agreement Sophene may have been officially assigned to Greater Armenia. At the same time, as both Rome and Parthia tended to see Greater Armenia as their vassal state, there was no reason for Rome to lack influence over the situation in Sophene, which straddled an important communication line between Kappadokia and Mesopotamia: the Tomisa crossing and the Ergani pass. It appears that the Rhandeia peace did not prevent Rome from keeping its forces in key places in Sophene. What is more, it should be stressed that Armenia was not a centralized state at that time, but rather a conglomerate of countries, some of which recognized the authority of the Armenian king. This tendency is, however, hardly attested in western parts of Greater Armenia (understood as the geographical notion, thus including Sophene and the Upper Tigris region), and was most likely only relevant in eastern parts of Greater Armenia.

In 298 CE, the region between the Euphrates and the Khabur rivers (*Transtigritanae regiones*) came under the official control of Rome. In 363 CE, this territory was limited to the area between the Euphrates and the Batman rivers (without Arzanene and Gordyene). To the south of the Tigris, the *Transtigritanae regiones* bordered on the Roman provinces of Osrhoene and Mesopotamia. By contrast, the *Transtigritanae regiones* were not incorporated into the administrative structure of the empire until the sixth century CE. Instead, Rome left the *Transtigritanae regiones* as semiautonomous countries under some kind of suzerainty: the rulers were called satraps and their offices were hereditary and held for life (until ca. 482–488 CE), but they were officially

245 The same idea is probably meant by Sullivan 1990, 160, who vividly writes that "the kingdom of Sophene later lost itself in the complexities of local history as the Romans struggled with Parthia for control of Armenia."

appointed by the Roman emperor. It appears that the number of satrapies (five in Prokopios' times) may have varied over the course of time depending on administrative and geopolitical developments. Effort was made to forge close ties between local elites and Rome by hosting members of local dynasties in Rome for education. The satraps had their own local forces, but the Romans had the right to keep legions in strategic places (cities and fortresses), and to recruit new legionaries and auxiliary forces from the region. The foreign policy of the satraps could not infringe on Roman interests, and the satraps were obliged to support Rome militarily. The autonomy of the *Transtigritanae regiones* was seriously limited in 527 CE and eventually completely removed in 536 CE, when the emperor incorporated them into the regular administrative structure of the Roman Empire.

PART 2

Gordyene

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Historical Geography of Gordyene¹

4.1 Xenophon's Karduchoi

The first ancient source that contributes to our knowledge on the historical geography of Gordyene (as the land of the Karduchoi) is Xenophon's *Anabasis*, which describes the march of the Greek army of “the Ten Thousand” under Cyrus the Younger to seize the Persian throne from his brother Artaxerxes II. The part of this march most relevant to the present study is the withdrawal of the Greek army of “the Ten Thousand” from Persia to the Black Sea. After the battle at Cunaxa in 401 BCE the Greeks started their march northwest alongside the Tigris. At some point of their route along the Tigris, the Greeks left the open Tigris valley and continued more directly north, marching into the country of the Καρδοῦχοι (*Anabasis* 4.1.1–4.3.2; see also 3.5.15).

The question arises as to where exactly the route of the “Ten Thousand” led through the land of Karduchoi (see Figure 32). In *Anab.* 4.3.1 Xenophon unambiguously locates the exit point from the land of the Karduchoi (ἡ χώρα τῶν Καρδούχων) as the Kentrites River (Κεντρίτης), which Xenophon calls the border between the land of Karduchoi and Armenia. Indeed, the name Κεντρίτης corresponds to the Armenian word *ktrič* (*divider*), which is related to the verb *ktrem*, meaning “to cut, to cut off,”² and as such expresses the function of this river as a territorial and cultural border.³ The Kentrites is widely identified with the modern Bohtan River, a tributary of the Tigris River in modern south-eastern Turkey.⁴ This identification rests mainly on geographical grounds and

1 This chapter is a slightly revised and expanded version of Marciak 2012b.

2 Ainsworth 1854, 314; Markwart 1930, 340; Hewsens 1983, 128, n. 12; Lendle 1995, 224; S. Brennan 2012, 321, n. 36. A different suggestion has been made by Manfredi 1986, 189, who thinks that the name Kentrites is derived from Serkhet'h, the Armenian name of the modern city Siirt. In turn, Bedrossian 1879, 363a suggests the following meaning: “a sheep-shearer.”

3 A. Sagona, C. Sagona 2004, 52.

4 Ainsworth 1854, 314; Eckhardt 1910b: 202–203; Weissbach 1921: 181; Lendle 1995, 207; Syme 1995, 31; Hewsens 2001, 29 (who even writes: “all scholars agree on the route as far as the Eastern Tigris [Kentrites, Bohtan Su]”); Waterfield 2006, 135; S. Brennan 2012, 321, n. 36. By contrast, see Sagona 2004, 299–328 (esp. 299–304) and A. Sagona, C. Sagona 2004, 51–52, who identify the Kentrites as the Aras River, much to the north of the Bohtan River. Consequently, Sagona's land of the Karduchoi is located directly south of the modern Erzurum. This identification is, however, more assumed than argued. While Sagona's interpretation of the route

consequently, like many other toponyms in Xenophon, is dependent on the identification of a preceding reference point on the route of the Greek army, and in this particular case depends on the identification of the entry point into the land of Karduchoi.

The identification of the entry point must be based on the context of Xenophon's narrative. The Greeks marched alongside the Tigris until they reached a dead end (see *Anab.* 3.5.7–18).⁵ Namely, to the north there was a high mountain range and to the west the Greeks had the Tigris, which was at this point impassable (*Anab.* 3.5.7; 4.1.2).⁶ Moving south or east would mean turning back towards the heartland of the Persian Empire.⁷ In this situation, the Greeks decided to head north into the country of the Karduchoi. The last three recognizable landmarks on their route alongside the Tigris before they reached a dead end were the *Ζαπάτας*, *Λάρισα*, and *Μέσπιλα* (*Anab.* 3.3.6, 3.4.7–9 and 3.4.10–12).

The *Ζαπάτας* is widely identified as the Great Zab.⁸ This identification can be argued on geographical grounds, but there is also a strong linguistic connection.⁹ The core *Ζαπ-* corresponds very well to the Semitic names of the two rivers called Zab (also frequently mentioned in Greek sources as *Λύκος*

of the “Ten Thousand” through Armenia could make some sense, his choice to place the crossroads not around Cizre but further to the north is completely arbitrary, since he has not dealt with topographical and geographical evidence from Xen. *Anab.* books 1–3 at all. In other words, we do not learn from Sagona how the “Ten Thousand” got to the crossroads and where e.g. Larisa and Mespila were located. Likewise mistaken is the old identification of the Kentrites as the Assyrian Khabur by Kinneir 1818, 483.

5 Waterfield 2006, 124–135, 130.

6 Waterfield 2006, 130; J.W.I. Lee 2007, 27 and n. 53. It is not entirely clear whether the river was only temporarily impassable, or if the riverbed was perhaps naturally too deep and wide at this point. It should also be noted that *Anab.* 4.1.1–4 (which emphasizes the river's depth and breadth) is considered as an interpolation by most editors. Another factor was that the Greeks could already see the Persian cavalry expecting them on the west bank of the Tigris. Furthermore, the plain terrain on the west bank would certainly suit the cavalry more than the Greek hoplites, and there was a risk that no stocks of supplies could be found on the west side of the Tigris since the Persians could implement a scorched-earth policy. See Waterfield 2006, 124–135 (esp. 130).

7 Waterfield 2006, 124–135 (esp. 130).

8 Weissbach 1919b, 1921; Weissbach 1927a, 2391–2392; Hansman 1987, 277; Lendle 1995, 122–123; Kessler 1999b, 265; Kessler 1999c, 575; Bosworth 2002, 366.

9 Marciak 2014a, 181.

and Κάπρος¹⁰): Zabū elu (the upper Zab) and Zabū shupalu (the lower Zab) in Assyrian texts, Ζάβας or Ζαβᾶς (sometimes with the additions of ὁ μέγας or ὁ μικρός or ὁ ἕτερος) in Byzantine sources, as well as Zaba and Zav in Syriac and Later Armenian.¹¹ Therefore, there can be no doubt that Xenophon's Zapatas is the Great Zab.¹²

The case of Xenophon's Larisa and Mespila is more problematic. Both are widely identified as Nimrud and Nineveh respectively, although there is no fully convincing explanation for Xenophon's names.¹³ Barnett suggests that Xenophon misunderstood the Akkadian *āl-šarrūti* meaning royal city,¹⁴ while according to Dalley, Larisa corresponds to the Akkadian Kar-Mulissi (modern Keremleis).¹⁵ The problem is that Λάρισα is a Greek name held by many ancient Greek cities,¹⁶ and one would have to assume that Xenophon put a genuine Greek toponym on a local name of Nimrud whose sound seemed to him to be similar (which is more likely for the name *āl-šarrūti* than for the toponym Kar-Mulissi), although he did not do the same for Nineveh. Namely, many scholars suggest that Xenophon's Mespila reproduces a local name of Nineveh directly. The first option is that Mespila could come from a Semitic root denoting an

10 Although, at first site, the Greek names may appear to differ from the Semitic names, *Lykos* is a correct Greek translation of its Semitic equivalent. *Lykos* means *wolf*, and especially the meaning of the Aramaic equivalent of the *Lykos*, *dīb* is well attested: *wolf*. In turn, the appearance of the river *Lykos* was usually paired with *Kapros* in ancient Greece. See *RE* XIII.2, 2389–2417. It was customary in ancient times to give names of wild animals to rivers to express their wild and potentially harmful nature. See Weissbach 1919b, 1921; Swoboda 1919, 1921–1922; Weissbach 1927a, 2391–2392; *LSJ* 1064–65; Lipiński 1999.

11 Weissbach 1919b, 1921; Weissbach 1927a, 2391–2392; Bosworth 2002, 366.

12 This does not mean that there are no problems with Xenophon's description of the Zapatas. He recalls the river, but he does not say how a river of such considerable dimensions was crossed by the Greeks (see Tuplin 1991, 45; S. Brennan 2012, 311). One of the possible explanations is that the Great Zab hit its annual low in September–October and consequently was easily fordable. For this interpretation, see J.W.I. Lee 2007, 27 and n. 54; and for the geographical data from Iraq, see Beaumont, Blake, Wagstaff 1988, 355–359 (esp. 356–357).

13 Weissbach 1924, 873; Weissbach 1931, 1164; Hewsens 1988–89, 278; Reade 1998, 65; Tuplin 2003, 370.

14 Barnett 1963, 25. But naming Nimrud as a royal city could only be accepted as an expression of local nostalgia, since technically Nimrud lost this status after ca. 707 BCE (Dalley 1993, 144; Tuplin 2003, 371).

15 Dalley 1993, 144: "since the names sound similar".

16 See the entry *Larisa* in *RE* 23, 840–873 and Zgusta, 1984, 331.

area of low-lying terrain:¹⁷ the Akkadian *mušpalu*¹⁸ (used for the description of Nineveh's surroundings in Sennacherib's inscriptions 8.27¹⁹), or the Aramaic *mšpyl*;²⁰ or *mšplh* (the fallen one).²¹ Other scholars point to Semitic names that could express Nineveh's state of destruction after 612 BCE²²—Kiepert suggests that Xenophon's interpreter misconstrued the Semitic word meaning Ruine, e.g. the Hebrew *mappêla*;²³ Gemoll in turn maintain that Xenophon's *Mespila* may echo the Hebrew *mašpil*, meaning *devastatus*.²⁴ Other scholars instead see a connection between Nineveh and Mosul²⁵—according to Herzfeld, *Mespila* may be a corrupted form of *al-Mawšil*, the Arabic name of modern Mosul.²⁶ *Mespila* has also been suggested to come from **mušpelu*, meaning *Muschelkalk*, *Kalkstein*,²⁷ or to be a malformation of *μεσ-πύλαι* allegedly meaning *central gates* (that is, located midway between the Persian Gulf, the Black Sea, the Caspian and Mediterranean seas),²⁸ or possibly to be connected with the Greek *Μεσπίλη*, denoting *medlar tree*, which could possibly be planted in this area.²⁹

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- 17 This option is called into question by Tuplin 2003, 372, who points out that it does not really match the topography of Nineveh—first, much of Nineveh can be considered as low-lying, but only with regard to the city walls and two particular hills—Kuyunjik and Nebi Yunus; second, the fact that the city looks low-lying from the perspective of the city walls is not unique for Nineveh, but in fact this feature could be applied to many other ancient cities.
- 18 K.M. Streck 1916, CDXXVI, n.1; Reade 1998, 65.
- 19 Luckenbill 1924, 114.
- 20 Reade 1998, 65.
- 21 Machinist 1993, 190.
- 22 It should, however, be noted that neither Xenophon himself (whose text is problematic) nor archaeological data necessarily suggest a total lack of inhabitation in Nineveh in 401 BCE. See Tuplin 2003, 370–371 and 387–389.
- 23 Kiepert 1878, 152.
- 24 Gemoll 1899, 298. By contrast, Weissbach 1931, 1164 rightly remarks that *mašpil* can mean only *erniedrigend*, *niedrig-machend*, and not *verwüstet* (*devastatus*). Indeed, the hiphil form, *mašpil* is an active form.
- 25 The problem with this hypothesis is that the city of Mosul developed primarily on the west bank of the Tigris and not on the east bank, where the ancient Nineveh was located and where the route of “Ten Thousand” led. See Weissbach 1931, 1164 and Tuplin 2003, 372.
- 26 Sarre, Herzfeld 1920, 207. It is extremely unlikely that a Greek name could be a corrupted form of a much later-attested Arabic name.
- 27 Tuplin 2003, 372, who quotes this explanation but does not name his source of information.
- 28 F. Jones 1854, 332. This option is deemed “absurd” by Tuplin 2003, 372.
- 29 Tuplin 2003, 372. This is an extremely speculative idea.

Although there is no fully satisfactory explanation for Xenophon's names, the identification of Larisa and Mespila as Nimrud and Nineveh is likely on geographical and topographical grounds.³⁰ Namely, both cities are characterized as neglected³¹ but once great and politically important cities of the Median kingdom located on the Tigris.³² Xenophon stresses their massive proportions—Larisa is said to have a wall twenty-five feet in breadth and a hundred in height. The circuit of its wall was two *parasangs* long. Furthermore, Xenophon writes of a large structure (a plethrum in breadth and two plethra in height) which he himself calls a *πυραμίς*, located next to Mespila, where nearby villagers took refuge from the oncoming Greek troops. In turn, Mespila is described as once a stronghold (*τείχος*) with foundations fifty feet in breadth and fifty in height. The wall was again fifty feet in breadth and a hundred in height, and its circuit was six *parasangs*. If we compare Xenophon's descriptions with the available archaeological data from Nimrud and Nineveh, the conclusion emerges that Xenophon's description of Nimrud makes "reasonable sense, with no more than modest allowance for inexactitude of observation and/or report",³³ and his description of Nineveh is "perhaps marginally less satisfactory than that of Nimrud".³⁴ And yet the fact remains that, except for Nimrud and Nineveh, we do not know of any other cities of such proportions and assumed political significance on the Tigris and north-west of the Great Zab in Xenophon's times.

If Larisa and Mespila can be identified as Nimrud and Nineveh, then we get an additional argument in identifying the entry point of the Greek army into the mountains of the Karduchoi. North of the route alongside the Tigris and past the Great Zab, Nimrud and Nineveh is the Tauros mountain range, and the first point when both the Tigris and the Tauros cross each other is the area around the modern city of Cizre.³⁵ This is the most likely area where the "Ten Thousand" were really forced to make a decision—either to cross the Tigris to

30 Tuplin 2003, 370: "beyond doubts".

31 See Tuplin 2003, 370–371 and 387–389 that Xenophon's use of *ἐρήμη* (with regard to Larisa itself and the outer walls of Mespila) does not necessarily mean that a city lies in ruins and has no population at all. What is more, Mespila is also named by Xenophon a *πόλις*.

32 In accordance with Xenophon's peculiar view on the extent of ancient Media. See Tuplin 2003, esp. 364.

33 Tuplin 2003, 376.

34 Tuplin 2003, 378.

35 Ainsworth 1854, 310–311; Syme 1995, 12, 30–31; Lendle 1995, 192; Tuplin 2003, 361–362 and n. 25; J.W.I. Lee 2007, 28, n. 58; S. Brennan 2012, 319. The terrain north-west of the Great Zab is an "easy country until one reaches the range south of Zakhō". The modern Zakhō is located ca. 59 km south-east of Cizre. However, after leaving the defile of Zakhō, one again

the west or to abandon their route alongside the Tigris and head north into the mountains.³⁶ In turn, the next major river stream north of the Tigris at Cizre is indeed the modern Bohtan River. To sum up, it is most likely that Xenophon's land of the Karduchoi can be located in the mountains situated north of the modern Turkish city Cizre and south of the Bohtan River.³⁷

Xenophon presents the country of the Karduchoi (ἡ χώρα τῶν Καρδούχων) as a mountainous region (τὰ Καρδοῦχεια ὄρη).³⁸ More precisely, the Karduchoi are said to live in villages (κώμαι) located in small valleys between the mountains and in nooks in the mountains (ἐν τοῖς ἄγχεσί τε καὶ μυχοῖς τῶν ὀρέων) and have moved upwards into the mountains (ἐπὶ τὰ ὄρη) only to find shelter

walks onto an extensive plain until Cizre. See Lendle 1995, 192; Tuplin 2003, 361–362 and n. 25; J.W.I. Lee 2007, 28, n. 58.

- 36 Ainsworth 1854, 310–311; Syme 1995, 12, 30–31; Lendle 1995, 192; Tuplin 2003, 361–362 and n. 25; J.W.I. Lee 2007, 28, n. 58; Schachner, Şaglamtimur 2005, 412, map 1; S. Brennan 2012, 319.

- 37 While the identification of the country of the Karduchoi—located between modern Cizre and the Bohtan River—can be firmly accepted, the precise route of the army of the Ten Thousand within these general limits is not entirely certain; for several slightly different routes, see Lendle 1995, 237, map 43. First, it is not clear, and perhaps a matter of conjecture, which exact pass was used by the Greeks in the vicinity of Cizre. Kazrik Boğazı (northwest of Cizre) is the main pass in this area: see Ainsworth 1854, 310–311; Syme 1995, 12, 29–30; Comfort 2009, 76–77; and S. Brennan 2012, 319–321. Another pass located east of Kazrik Boğazı and Küreli Dağı has also been put forward as a possible route; see Schachner, Şaglamtimur 2008. Furthermore, there are two main locations that may serve as exit points from the country of the Karduchoi. First, some scholars point to the vicinity of modern Siirt (Manfredi 1986, 178–189; J.W.I. Lee 2007, 28, n. 58, 30, n. 76); second, the vicinity of the junction of the Tigris and the Bohtan has been proposed by Lendle 1995, 184, 192; Schachner, Şaglamtimur 2005; Schachner, Şaglamtimur 2008. The latter has been reinforced by the nearby find of a Boeotian helmet (dated to the fifth–fourth century BCE) in the Tigris: see Connolly 1984, 85, no. 107 and Sekunda 1994, 182–183, no. 201c; Schachner, Şaglamtimur 2005.

- 38 Xenophon's use of ὄρος may refer to a mountain, but also to a hill or a range of mountains or hills. It should also be noted that even today there is no clear-cut (qualitative or quantitative) definition of the distinction between mountains and hills, though the former are of course supposed to be higher in general. The topographical profile of the mountains in the area between Şırnak and Cizre differs from that marked by the highest peaks of the Tauros further to the north. Most of the area features altitude over 1000 m, and only in the center of the region over 2000 m. The mountains between Şırnak and Cizre have aptly been described by S. Brennan 2012, 321 as “a rugged hillscape marked by steep heights and valleys”, who also remarks but it is not until the actual Tauros is met to the north “that the terrain becomes mountainous in the sense that we might understand it.” See S. Brennan 2012, 321.

(Anab. 4.1.7–8). This description means that the pattern of settlement of the Karduchoi was essentially twofold. First, in the hollows there were villages in clusters (Anab. 4.22.2–3; 4.3.1), perhaps numbering one or two hundred houses apiece, if modern comparisons (from the 20th century) can be any guide to us.³⁹ To reach these settlements, the Greeks frequently needed to step aside (slightly) from their route. Second, the folds of the surrounding slopes could house small hamlets of houses, and this settlement could scatter linearly along a road or track (Anab. 4.1.7).⁴⁰

Xenophon's description of weather conditions the Greeks encountered in the land of the Karduchoi gives the impression of a rainy and misty country. One should, however, note that if the Greeks left Babylonia in early spring (in February or, less likely, in April), they reached the mountains of the Karduchoi in early autumn (likely in mid-October).⁴¹ This means that their arrival coincided with the beginning of the autumn weather marked by an increasing appearance of rainfalls and mists, as well as by a considerable drop in the daytime temperature in the region.⁴²

4.2 Strabo

In Strabo's *Geographika* we can find numerous brief references to Gordyene (*Geog.* 2.1.26; 11.12.4; 11.14.2; 11.14.8; 16.1.1; 16.1.8; 16.1.21; 16.2.5), as well as one excursus directly focusing on Gordyene, which is perhaps the most extensive account about this country in ancient literature—*Geog.* 16.1.24–25 (16.2.5 briefly repeats one aspect of Gordyene's *Siedlungslegende*).⁴³

The brief references are made only in the context of very general descriptions of large geographical areas. In such descriptions, the location of Gordyene is given only in relation to other geographical or ethnographical entities. For instance, in *Geog.* 16.1.8 Strabo describes the borders of Babylonia, and does so by enumerating Babylonia's neighbors including Gordyene. To be more precise, the country of the Babylonians is said to be surrounded

39 J.W.I. Lee 2007, 32–33.

40 J.W.I. Lee 2007, 33.

41 J.W.I. Lee 2007, 19 and 26.

42 J.W.I. Lee 2007, 30.

43 Strabo's citations are from the Loeb Classical Library, which I have occasionally modified with regard to the reading of proper names. See H.L. Jones 1928 and 1930.

on the west by the Arabs called Scenitae, as far as Adiabene and Gordyene (μέχρι τῆς Ἀδιαβηνῆς καὶ τῆς Γορδυαίας), and on the north by the Armenians and the Medes as far as the Zagros.⁴⁴

In turn, in *Geog.* 16.1.1 Strabo refers to the borders of the country of the Assyrians (understood in a very broad sense as much of Mesopotamia) and enumerates many countries around it in a fairly long line, among others—

Dolomene and Kalachene and Chazene and Adiabene, the tribes of Mesopotamia in the neighborhood of the Gordyaeans (περὶ Γορδυαίους [sic]), and the Mygdonians in the neighborhood of Nisibis.⁴⁵

As a result, on the basis of *Geog.* 16.1.1 and 16.1.8 we can rather get only a general impression as to where Gordyene was located, and this location is put approximately with regard to Gordyene's neighbors. Some toponyms recalled by Strabo are easier to identify than others. The northern border of Strabo's Adiabene definitely falls on the Lykos River, unambiguously identified as the Great Zab,⁴⁶ and Mygdonia was located on the plain to the south of the mountain region of Tūr 'Abdīn, with its main city, Nisibis on the modern Görgarbonizra River (the Mygdonios of classical sources).⁴⁷ In turn, the Arabian Scenitae and the tribes of Mesopotamia cannot really be ascribed to a particular region—the name *Scenitae* is not an ethnicon, but a designation of a way of life ("one who dwells in a tent").⁴⁸ Thus, the Arabian Scenitae and the tribes of Mesopotamia were nomadic tribes that could be found in many places in the Mesopotamian desert living on pasture and booty, but also on tolls taken from travelers.⁴⁹

Generally speaking, in *Geog.* 16.1.1 and 16.1.6 Adiabene clearly stands out as a reference point to Gordyene, but there is also a clear connection between Gordyene and cultural elements (Mygdonia, nomads of Mesopotamia including some Arabian tribes) that belong to the upper Mesopotamian valley marked by the *west* bank of the Tigris and the *east* bank of the Euphrates. In other

44 H.L. Jones 1930, 202–203.

45 H.L. Jones 1930, 193–194.

46 Marciak 2014a, 180–181.

47 Honigmann, Bosworth 2012. For Nisibis, see Sturm 1936, 714–757; Pigulevskaja 1963, 49–59; Kessler 2000, 962–963; Oppenheimer 1983, 319–334 (a basic collection of sources on Nisibis); Oppenheimer 1993, 313–333.

48 Shahīd 1984, 243–244; Sartre 2005, 239; Myers 2010, 16–17.

49 Shahīd 1984, 243–244; Sartre 2005, 239; Myers 2010, 16–17.

words, Strabo's Gordyene has clearly passed by the "Armenian Mountains" (see below) and tends towards the Mesopotamian valley.

In *Geog.* 2.1.26, Strabo estimates distances of parallels and meridians passing through the Mesopotamian region and in writing about meridians from Armenia to Babylonia recalls Gordyene twice. More precisely, in drawing the line from Babylon northwards, Strabo says that

the stadia have been measured up to the Armenian Gates and amount to about one thousand one hundred; whereas the stadia through Gordyene (διὰ Γορδυαίων) and Armenia are still unmeasured.⁵⁰

Likewise, in briefly describing the course of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers in *Geog.* 2.1.26, Strabo reckons that they

flow from Armenia southwards; and then, as soon as they pass the mountains of Gordyene (τὰ τῶν Γορδυαίων ὄρη), they describe a great circle and enclose a considerable territory, Mesopotamia; and then they turn toward the winter rising of the sun and the south, but more so the Euphrates; and the Euphrates, after becoming ever nearer to the Tigris in the neighborhood of the Wall of Semiramis and a village called Opis (from which village the Euphrates was distant only about two hundred stadia), and, after flowing through Babylon, empties into the Persian Gulf.⁵¹

Geog. 2.1.26 gives us only a general location of Gordyene, but a few interesting details still emerge. While Gordyene is a distinctive region, it is also coupled with Armenia. For instance, since Strabo's Gordyene in *Geog.* 2.1.26 appears to be a mountainous region (τὰ τῶν Γορδυαίων ὄρη) and the *Armenian* gates (that is, mountain breaches which provide a way through) allow access to *Gordyene* as well, it follows that the Gordyean mountains are located within the geographical realm of the Armenian Mountains.⁵²

Further, the relation between the mountains of Gordyene and the course of the Tigris is also important (see Figure 33). In *Geog.* 2.1.26 the Gordyean mountains are located alongside the Tigris, but before the Tigris makes a bend to form the upper Tigris valley. From the modern geographical point of view, the main course of the Tigris makes only one sharp bend near modern Diyarbakır;

50 H.L. Jones 1917, 302–303.

51 H.L. Jones 1917, 302–305.

52 Another issue is that Strabo probably mistook the Armenian Gates for the Armenian Mountains. See Syme 1995, 39–45.

this would suggest an unprecedented location of Gordyene. However, the situation can easily be explained if Strabo did not know of the main course of the western Tigris, and he instead considered one of its tributaries as the actual source stream. Indeed, it is widely held that this is the case with Strabo, who considered either the modern Bohtan (especially its northern tributary the Möks River) or the Bitlis River as the source stream of the Tigris (past Lake Van, see also below).⁵³ If so, then the location of the Gordyaeen mountains is put very clearly in *Geog.* 2.1.26: they stretch along the modern Bohtan (Bitlis) River until its junction with the Tigris (in the vicinity of modern Çattepe/Tilli).

In *Geog.* 11.14.2 Strabo again describes the course of the Euphrates, and in doing so, he enumerates mountain ranges and peaks along its course (Tauros, Antitauros, Mt. Μάσιον and Mt. Νιφάτης), as well as many countries such as Kappadokia, Kommagene, Sophene, Armenia and Gordyene whose borders are marked by these natural formations. In particular, Gordyene is briefly mentioned with regard to two mountains⁵⁴—Mt. Μάσιον and Mt. Νιφάτης:

above Mt. Μάσιον, far towards the east opposite Gordyene (κατὰ τὴν Γορδυηνήν), lies Mt. Νιφάτης.

Thus, Gordyene is located between Mt. Masion and Mt. Niphates on the southwest-north-east line. Where can these two mountains be located?

Mt. Masion is not only mentioned by Strabo (*Geog.* 11.5.6, 11.12.4, 11.14.2, 16.1.23) but also by Ptolemy (*Geogr.* 5.17.2).⁵⁵ The evidence as to its location, however, is confused. On the one hand, Strabo *Geog.* 11.12.4, 11.14.2, 16.1.23 leave no doubt that Mt. Masion was located west of the Tigris in Mesopotamia, to be precise, in the vicinity of Nisibis. Likewise, Ptolemy *Geogr.* 5.17.2 puts the location of Mt. Masion as north of Mt. Singara. What is more, this ancient nomenclature survived in some modern traditions that still use the name Mazi Mountains for the belt of limestone hills north of modern Nusaybin (where, to be more precise, three distinctive parts of the massif can be distinguished: Karaca Dağı, Mazi Dağı, and Tūr ‘Abdīn).⁵⁶ On the other hand, *Geog.* 11.12.4 and 11.5.6 in particular (and the latter is by far the most extensive description of this

53 See Honigmann 1936, 1008–1023 (esp. 1011); Dillemann 1962, 40–49 (esp. 41–43 for Strabo); Syme 1995, 28–29.

54 The Greek ὄρος may refer to both a mountain and a range of mountains. So is the case with Strabo. What is more, the range of mountains can be named after its main peak. See Dillemann 1962, 29–38; S. Brennan 2012, 321, n. 38.

55 Weissbach 1930a, 2068–2069.

56 Sinclair 1994–95, 188–189, 218 n. 44. See also Dillemann 1962, 32–35.

mountain) clearly speak of Mt. Masion as part of the Armenian Mountains, which implies a modern location east of the Tigris.⁵⁷ What is more, Strabo's detailed description of winter conditions on Mt. Masion in 11.5.6 (regular and heavy snowfalls and the use of skis) does not fit the mountain region of Țūr 'Abdin at all; it does, however, correspond perfectly to the winter conditions of the Tauros east of the Tigris.⁵⁸ Indeed, there is a world of difference between the Tauros, a huge mountain massif, and the mountains west of the Tigris near Nisibis, the latter being "a series of undulations rather than a mountain chain."⁵⁹ This problem could be solved if we accept Syme's observation that Strabo in fact knew only one mountain range between Armenia and Mesopotamia, that is, the Tauros.⁶⁰ Thus, although a location near Mt. Masion usually points to a site south the Tigris in the vicinity of Nisibis, in some cases it may also refer to a site in the actual Tauros north of the Tigris.⁶¹

There is a more serious problem with the identification of the Niphates.⁶² The name could perhaps be understood by the Greeks as a malformation of the Greek νιφάς meaning *snow*.⁶³ However, it has a good parallel in the Armenian *Npat*, which itself could be derived from the Iranian *Apām Napāt* and would mean a dwelling place of a *Wassergenius*.⁶⁴ Alternatively, it could go back to the Iranian **ni-pāta* (*beschützt*) or *ni-pātar* (nom. -nipātā, *Beschützer*) and would be an allusion to the snow cover on the mountain.⁶⁵ Lastly, Niphates could also be "a by-form of Nibarus" (attested also as Βάρης in Nikolaos Damaskenos apud Josephus, *Ant.* 1.94–95) and would take its name from the description of Noah's Ark (supposed to have rested on this mountain) as a βάρης, that is, a "cumbrous craft used for inland navigation".⁶⁶

57 Weissbach 1930a, 2068–2069; Syme 1995, 29–30, 46–49.

58 Syme 1995, 48–49; Sinclair 1989, 362.

59 Syme 1995, 47.

60 Syme 1995, 47–49.

61 As for possible identification of, what Syme considers to be the original Mt. Masion on the east bank of the Tigris, the Sasun Dağı have been suggested because they match Strabo's concept of Mt. Masion as a landmark (north of the Tigris) dividing the territory of Sophene from that of Gordyene. See Markwart 1930, 14; Syme 1995, 47–49.

62 It is very telling that Garsoïan 1989, 484 does not suggest any etymology.

63 Weidner 1936, 706.

64 Bartholomae 1904, 1039; Markwart 1930, 3–4; Markwart 1938, 128.

65 Markwart 1896, 186. By contrast, see Syme 1995, 36, who observes that this etymology is impossible to maintain since Niphates is also attested as a personal name in Arrian, *Anab.* 1.12.8 and 1.16.3. It is likewise rejected by Hübschmann 1904, 457 who instead connects Niphates with the Old Armenian **Nipāt* or **Nupāt*.

66 Syme 1995, 36.

Mt. Niphates is mentioned by many ancient sources,⁶⁷ which associate it with either Mt. Masion (and the Gordyaeen Mountains (Γορδυαῖα ὄρη),⁶⁸ west of the Tigris—*Geog.* 11.12.4) or the Gordyaeen Mountains (here apparently east of the Tigris, *Plut. Alex.* 31.10), or the Tauros (Pliny the Elder *HN*, 5.27; Pomponius Mela 1.15.81; Pisander [apud Stephen of Byzantium 477]) or with Armenia in general (*Geogr.* 6.1.1; *Amm. Marc.* 23.6.13; Josephus, *Ant.* 18.51).⁶⁹ Thus, while all sources but *Geog.* 11.12.4 clearly put the location of Mt. Niphates east of the Tigris, its location is given only in general terms and varies from more southern locations (*Plut. Alex.* 31.10: close to the upper Tigris valley near Gaugamela) to the highest points of the Armenian Tauros (e.g. Pisander apud Stephen of Byzantium 477). Several identifications have been suggested on geographical grounds—the Ala Dağı (north-west of Lake Van),⁷⁰ the Ararat⁷¹ or the Cudi Dağı⁷²—but it may not be possible to pin down its location, since the ancient sources themselves did not have a very clear idea as to its location.⁷³

67 The theme of Mt. Niphates made its way into Latin poetry (Horatius, *Carmina* 2.9.20; Vergilius, *Georgica* 3.30), for which see Weidner 1936, 707; Durrett 1930, 503; Syme 1995, 29, 36–38.

68 See also Lasserre 1975, 107: some codices contain the following readings: Γορδυαῖα ὄρη and Γονδυαῖα ἔθνη.

69 Weidner 1936, 706–707; Syme 1995, 31–33.

70 Markwart 1930, 3–4.

71 Herzfeld 1907, 220.

72 Syme 1995, 32. But this identification is possible only if Mt. Niphates is identified with the Mt. Nippur known from Assyrian sources. Mt. Nippur is unequivocally identified due to the discovery of an Assyrian commemoration plaque on the Cudi Dağı. For the inscription, see Luckenbill 1924, 63–66 and Luckenbill 1927, 139–140 (no. 296).

73 The identification with the Ala Dağı (north-west of Lake Van) or the Ararat can be maintained only if one focuses on the connection between the Niphates and the sources of the Tigris (Strabo *Geog.* 11.12.4). In turn, Syme's identification with the Cudi Dağı can be maintained only through Strabo's references to the Niphates and the Gordyaeen Mountains (*Geog.* 11.12.4; *Plut. Alex.* 31), but then one has to disregard the connection to the sources of the Tigris. In contrast to Syme (Strabo's texts show that the Niphates was located in the Gordyaeen Mountains), we must stress that although such a location can be argued indirectly on the basis of 11.12.4 (Tauros *proper* can also be called the Gordyaeen Mountains, and at some point "the Tauros rises higher and bears the name Niphates", thus the Niphates is located in the Tauros and the Tauros equals the Gordyaeen Mountains), further east the Tauros is also said by Strabo to "form the Zagros". All this could simply mean that different parts of Strabo's Tauros have local names, and not that the Niphates is located in Gordyene). In 11.14.2 Strabo does not really locate the Niphates in Gordyene, but rather mentions Gordyene as a reference point to the Niphates, which in fact suggests that they only border each other, but not that one includes the other.

At any rate, although Mt. Masion may refer to both the limestone massif near Nisibis (preferably) and the Tauros massif north of the Tigris (possibly), and the location of Mt. Niphates is also hard to pin down, it appears that the southwest to northeast axis used by Strabo suggests that at least in *Geog.* 11.14.2 Mt. Niphates is most likely located by Strabo east of Lake Van (and understood as the highest point of the Armenian Tauros), and Mt. Masion is (only probably) meant as the limestone belt south of the Tauros. If so, Strabo's Gordyene extends beyond the Tigris as far as the foot of the limestone belt south of the Tauros.

In *Geog.* 11.14.8 and *Geog.* 16.1.21 Gordyene is again mentioned by Strabo in relation to the course of the Tigris. In *Geog.* 16.1.21 it is said that the Tigris

flows through the middle of Lake Thopitis ... and, after traversing it to the opposite shore, it sinks underground with upward blasts and a loud noise; and having flowed for a considerable distance invisible, it rises again not far away from Gordyene (Γορδυαίᾱ)....⁷⁴

In turn, in *Geog.* 11.14.8 the Tigris is said to

... flow down towards Opis and the wall of Semiramis, as it is called, leaving the Gordyaeans and the whole of Mesopotamia on the right (τὸς Γορδυαίους ἐν δεξιᾷ ἄφεις ...), while the Euphrates, on the contrary, has the same country on the left, having approached one another and formed Mesopotamia, the former flows through Seleucia to the Persian Gulf and the latter through Babylon....⁷⁵

Thanks to both texts, we not only locate Gordyene *alongside* the course of the Tigris, but we learn that it was located close to Lake Thospitis. Lake Θωσπίτις has been identified as Lake Van or Lake Gölcük/Hazar, since both lakes had local non-Greek names that could be rendered with the Greek Thospitis.⁷⁶ Namely, the ancient Urartian name of Lake Van is Tušpas (and Armenian *Tosp*),⁷⁷ while Lake Gölcük was known in Armenian as Covk', which could also

74 H.L. Jones 1930, 228–229.

75 H.L. Jones 1928, 328–329.

76 Markwart 1930, 30–31; Hewsen 1982, 136; Hewsen 1985, 74. For a full list of references to this lake and its different spellings, see Weissbach 1936b, 349–350 (and also Weissbach 1936a, 349).

77 Hübschmann 1904, 469; Markwart 1930, 30–31; Hewsen 1982, 136; Hewsen 1985, 74; Syme 1995, 32.

yield the Greek $\theta\omega\psi\acute{\iota}\alpha$ and this sound turn into $\theta\omega\sigma\pi\acute{\iota}\alpha$.⁷⁸ The first option is more likely for geographical reasons (as other sources indicate the general vicinity of Lake Van). Two other toponyms placed by Strabo in the vicinity of Gordyene are Opis and the Wall of Semiramis. The latter (also called the Wall of Media) is known from ancient literature as one of the city walls of Babylon which was believed to have been built by Queen Semiramis.⁷⁹ The location of Opis is not exactly known, but the context makes it clear that it should be looked for in Babylonia (see also *Geog.* 16.1.9, where Opis together with Seleucia are the limit of navigability on the Tigris).⁸⁰ Despite difficulties in suggesting a precise identification for either landmark, the very idea of these two toponyms being located in Babylonia throws up a serious problem for Strabo's location of Gordyene in *Geog.* 11.14.8. Not only does Gordyene lie on the west bank of the Tigris, but it is put in connection with most southern landmarks of the Tigris in Babylonia.⁸¹ This interpretation has been widely considered a mistake on the part of Strabo, and the source of this mistake could be conceivably explained only if we assume that Strabo mistook the Tigris for one of its eastern tributaries (e.g. the Diyala).⁸² What is more, since this passage resembles *Geog.* 2.1.26 in that Opis and the Wall of Semiramis are mentioned in both accounts as landmarks marking the southern course of the Tigris, where Strabo has explicitly acknowledged his source of information—Eratosthenes—it is precisely Eratosthenes who may be considered to be responsible for the picture of Gordyene located west of the Tigris and close to Babylonia.⁸³

Of special importance is *Geog.* 16.1.24–25, where Strabo mentions three main cities of Gordyene:

Near the Tigris ($\pi\rho\acute{o}\varsigma\ \delta\grave{\epsilon}\ \tau\hat{\omega}\ \tau\acute{\iota}\gamma\rho\epsilon\iota$) lie the places belonging to the Gordyaeans ($\tau\grave{\alpha}\ \tau\hat{\omega}\nu\ \Gamma\omicron\rho\delta\upsilon\acute{\alpha}\iota\omega\nu\ \chi\omega\rho\acute{\iota}\alpha$), whom the ancients called Karduchoi (Καρδοῦχοι); and their cities are named Sareisa and Satalka and Pinaka, a very powerful fortress, with three citadels, each enclosed by a separate fortification of its own, so that they constitute, as it were, a triple city.⁸⁴

78 Markwart 1930, 30–31; Hewsens 1982, 136; Hewsens 1985, 74.

79 Sayce 1888, 104–113 (esp. 111); Barnett 1963, 19.

80 Luckenbill 1924, 148–151; Barnett 1963, 18–20.

81 Syme 1995, 33.

82 Markwart 1930, 6–9; Honigsmann 1936, 1011; Syme 1995, 33.

83 Syme 1995, 33, 44.

84 H.L. Jones 1930, 230–232.

Strabo's Gordyene is clearly located alongside the Tigris, and its main three cities are explicitly said to lie on the bank of this river. As we already know, Strabo's Tigris may mean both the Bohtan (Bitlis) River or the Tigris's main course past modern Çattepe (Tilli). Out of the three main cities of Gordyene mentioned by Strabo, only Pinaka can be safely identified. For a long time, Pinaka (Πίνακα) has been widely identified as the modern Eski Finik (Fenek/Fenik, Eski Yapı) exclusively on linguistic grounds,⁸⁵ but there is nowadays archaeological evidence which may support this identification (see below).⁸⁶

We are much less fortunate with the identification of the two other cities mentioned by Strabo. According to Kiepert's map, Strabo's Σάρεισα could be identified with Šareš (located in the Tūr 'Abdin region west of the Tigris).⁸⁷ Sachau in turn suggests that Strabo's *Sareisa* is identical to Ši-ri-eš-še, mentioned in Assyrian records commemorating Tiglath-Pileser I's victory over his enemies—Kummuḫ and Kur-ṭi-e⁸⁸—and can perhaps be identified with a small village called Šariš or Šiérš (sic) located on the east bank of the Tigris.⁸⁹ Modern assyriologists, however, differ from Sachau in the identification of the toponyms mentioned in Assyrian annals—first, they do distinguish two cities bearing a similar name—Šarišša and Šērišša—both located in Central Anatolia;⁹⁰ secondly, they locate Kummuḫ on the west bank of the upper Euphrates and see it as a predecessor of Kommagene.⁹¹ Thus, the geographical context set by the modern interpretation of Assyrian toponyms is remote from Sachau's suggestion—that is, there is no unambiguous evidence for Strabo's *Sareisa* or any of its equivalents in Assyrian texts. Again, according to Sinclair, Strabo's *Sareisa* is the modern Shakh located north-east of Cizre on the southern slopes of Cudi Dağ.⁹² There is, however, no archaeological or epigraphical data from this area to back up this suggestion, and the linguistic similarity does not really seem to be close at all. As far as Strabo's Σάταλλα is concerned, Dillemann suggests the modern Shattakh, a settlement located on

85 Weissbach 1920b, 2497; Markwart 1930, 9–10; Dillemann 1962, 111.

86 Algaze 1989, 248–252; Algaze, Breuninger, Lightfoot, Rosenberg 1991, 191–192.

87 This is accepted by Hübschmann 1904, 334, n. 2; Dillemann 1962, 111. Weissbach 1920b, 2497 also speaks of Šariš, “das freilich nicht am Tigris, sondern an einem von rechts kommenden Nebenfluß liegt”.

88 Sachau 1897, 51–52. This identification was already called into question by Langdon, Gardiner 1920, 196.

89 Sachau 1883, 416. Markwart 1930, 9–10 also prefers the east bank of the Tigris as the location of *Sareisa*, but considers the west bank “nicht unwahrscheinlich”.

90 del Monte, Tischler 1978, 360–361; Forlanini 1998, 221; Wilhelm 2009, 61–62.

91 Hawkins 1980–83, 338–340.

92 Sinclair 1989, 359.

the Bohtan River.⁹³ In turn, Sinclair suggested the modern Eskieruh (formerly called Sedukh) as Strabo's *Satalka*.⁹⁴ Eskieruh is located north-east of Cizre on the southern slopes of Cudi Dağı.⁹⁵ In either case, the identification rests on the *alleged* similarity of names, and there is no archaeological data like in Eski Finik to reinforce these suggestions.

4.3 Pliny the Elder

We hear of Gordyene twice in Book 6 of Pliny the Elder's *Historia Naturalis* (hereinafter *HN*)⁹⁶ Like in Strabo's long enumeration of geographical and ethnographical entities, Gordyene is mentioned only in passing. In *HN* 6.43–44, while sketching the map of Asia, Pliny the Elder's look at this part of the world moves from Media to the Caspian Sea. At some point, he states that

joining on to the Adiabeni are the people formerly called the *Carduchi* and now the *Cordueni*, past whom flows the river Tigris, and adjoining these are the 'Roadside' *Pratitae*, as they are called, who hold the Caspian Gates.⁹⁷

In turn, in *HN* 6.129 Gordyene appears in the context of the course of the Tigris, which after receiving as tributaries from Armenia the *Parthenias* and the *Nicephorion*,

makes a frontier between the Arab tribes of the Orroei and Adiabeni and forms the region of Mesopotamia mentioned above; it then traverses the mountains of the Gordyaeans (*montes Gurdiaeorum*), flowing round Apamea, a town belonging to Mesene, and 125 miles short of Babylonian Seleucia splits into two channels....⁹⁸

Pliny the Elder's *Pratitae* are hard to identify. Solinus, Pliny's 3rd or 4th c. CE interpreter,⁹⁹ calls the *Pratitae* a Median tribe.¹⁰⁰ Pliny's nickname, παρ' ὁδὸν

93 Dillemann 1962, 111.

94 Sinclair 1989, 359.

95 Sinclair 1989, 359.

96 Pliny the Elder's text used here is that of Rackham 1942.

97 Rackham 1942, 370–371.

98 Rackham 1942, 436–437.

99 Brodersen 2011, 64–65, 70.

100 Brodersen 2011, 81.

[sic],¹⁰¹ indicates that they were a nomadic tribe and as such could frequently change the place of settlement. In Pliny the Elder's *HN* 6.43–44, their location is connected with the access to a travel and trade route whose control (tolls taken from travelers) enabled them to make a living. In turn, the interpretation of the *Caspian Gates* constitutes a notorious problem as ancient sources do not use this term with much consistency—at least three passes could be called by this name: first, the *Caspian Gates proper*, a set of defiles between Media and Parthia; second, the pass of Darial through the central Caucasus; third and lastly, the pass of Darband between the Caucasus and the Caspian Sea.¹⁰² It seems that the most tangible clue given by Pliny the Elder in *HN* 6.43–44 is his reference to the Adiabeni, located along the western frontier of the Zagros. This connection could suggest that the Caspian Gates in *HN* 6.43–44 are confused with the Median Gates that open access to Media (especially Ecbatana) across the Zagros.¹⁰³

As for *HN* 6.129, Pliny the Elder's Orroei (see also *HN* 6.117) are widely acknowledged as the people of Osrhoene (later Edessa),¹⁰⁴ but the fact that he puts them next to the Adiabeni. This definition of the territorial extent of both Osrhoene and Adiabene implies their largest territorial extent (for Osrhoene to the east, and for Adiabene to the west), as it does not include other ethno-geographical entities in the area between Osrhoene and Adiabene—especially Mygdonia with its capital, Nisibis.¹⁰⁵ As for the Parthenias River, the Greek Παρθενίας (clearly corresponding to the Greek παρθένος, but, like all river names in Greek, being masculine¹⁰⁶) has been suggested to correspond to the Syriac Kallpa meaning *a bride*, the latter also being called νυμφίος (a bridegroom) in Greek sources,¹⁰⁷ and is widely identified as the modern Batman River.¹⁰⁸ The

101 Rackham 1942, 370.

102 See A.R. Anderson 1928, 130–163 (esp. 130–131); Kettenhofen 1994a, 13–19 (esp. 13–14).

103 Syme 1995, 45. By contrast, A.R. Anderson 1928, 130–131 considers Pliny the Elder's Caspian Gates in *HN* 6.43–44 to be the Caspian Gates proper.

104 H.J.W. Drijvers 1977, 866; Millar 1993, 456–457; Ross 2001, 22–23; Sartre 2005, 239; Edwell 2008, 11.

105 Ross 2001, 22–23.

106 Different translations have been suggested for the masculine παρθενίας—*der Jungfräuliche* (Suerbaum 1981, 1245, n. 176 with caution) or *a son of a concubine* (LSJ 1339).

107 Hübschmann 1904, 306: *kallaḡ*; Brockelmann 1928, 326–327: *Kallpa*; Markwart 1930, 82: *Kallaḡ*; Luther 1997, 78: *kallat*; Sokoloff 2002, 628: *Kallpa*. For the etymology of Parthenias and Nymphios and their use as a cognomen in ancient literature and Latin inscriptions, see Suerbaum 1981, 1244–1245 and nn. 175–176; Kittel, Friedrich, Bromiley 1985, 657; Noy 1993, 203.

108 Lehmann-Haupt 1926, 400; Markwart 1930, 82, 121; Honigmann 1935, 5; Dillemann 1962, 48–49, 253–254; Blockley 1984, 31–32; Wheeler 1991, 506; Talbert 2000, 1277; Kaegi 2003, 131.

identification of the *Nicephorion* is not clear at all. This river is also mentioned by Tacitus, *Ann.* 15.4, in his description of Tigranokerta (a part of its walls is said to be encircled by the *Nicephorius*), and as the identification of this city is a notorious problem, the more so is Tacitus' reference to the *Nicephorion*/*Nicephorius* whose identification depends on that of the site of Tigranokerta.¹⁰⁹ The most frequently suggested identification is either the Garzan River or one of the tributaries of the Batman River.¹¹⁰ Lastly, the fact that Pliny the Elder puts the mountains of Gordyene after the Mesopotamia region and next to Apamea in Babylonia reminds us of some traditions present in Strabo that are apparently derived from Eratosthenes and indeed located Gordyene in the most southern areas of the Fertile Crescent.

4.4 Ptolemy

In Ptolemy's *Geography* we find two brief references to Gordyene.¹¹¹ Chapter 13 of Book 5 is devoted to the description of Greater Armenia, and in this context, in *Geogr.* 5.13.5 Ptolemy mentions the mountains of Gordyene (τὰ Γορδυαία ὄρη) and categorizes them as one of the ranges belonging to the mountains of Armenia (notably, the same in Ptolemy refers to the Zagros Mountains). Ptolemy locates the middle of the Gordyene Mountains at 75°39'40'. Likewise in *Geogr.* 5.13.20 Ptolemy states that

towards the East extending from the sources of the Tigris River is Bagrauandene and, below it, Gordyene (Γορδυηνή), east of which is Kotaia and, below it, the Mardians.¹¹²

Ptolemy's ethnonyms are not easy to identify. His *Bagrauandēnē* may correspond to the name of a province known from Armenian sources: *Bagrewand*, located on the modern Ağrı plain.¹¹³ It has been suggested that this name derives from either the Old Iranian **bāya.raivanta*, meaning *rhubarb garden*,¹¹⁴ or

¹⁰⁹ Markwart 1930, 82–83; Sinclair 1994–95, 203.

¹¹⁰ See Eckhardt 1909, 409; Lehmann-Haupt 1926, 400; Markwart 1930, 120–121; Dillemann 1962, 48–49, 253–254; Talbert 2000, 1277; Kaegi 2003, 131.

¹¹¹ The translation used here is that of Hewsen 1982, 148–150. The Greek text is that of Stückelberger, Graßhoff 2006, 548 and 554.

¹¹² Hewsen 1982, 150.

¹¹³ Markwart 1930, *11; Russell 1985, 452–453; Howard-Johnston 2006, x.

¹¹⁴ Minorsky 1965, 149.

the Iranian, *baga-raēvanta*- meaning *der reiche Spender* (*Mithra*).¹¹⁵ In Russell's opinion, only the second etymology is correct, but should be translated as *of the bounteous God* (*Ahura Mazdā*) as the epithet *raēvant-* is characteristic of *Ahura Mazdā* in Zoroastrian texts.¹¹⁶ Kotaia has likewise been suggested to correspond to Armenian toponyms, that is to *Kortaia preserved in the Armenian as Korčayk', and consequently to match the Armenian territory of Korčayk' or one of its subdivisions.¹¹⁷ The identification of the Mardians (Μάρδοι, *Mardi*) is problematic, since ancient sources mention the Mardians (also as *Amardoi*) in different locations of the Middle East (the eastern shore of the Black Sea, Armenia, Media, and Persia).¹¹⁸ As Pliny the Elder's general description takes the sources of the Tigris as a starting point and then moves east and south-east, the Mardians in Armenia are most likely meant in *Geogr.* 5.12.9.¹¹⁹ The Armenian Mardians also appear in Xen., *Anab.* 4.3.4, *Geog.* 11.13.3, Plutarch, *Ant.* 41–48, Tac. *Ann.* 14.23.¹²⁰ Especially Plutarch, *Ant.* 41–48 and Tac. *Ann.* 14.23 give more precise clues as to the location of the Armenian Mardians—in Plutarch, *Ant.* 41–48 the Mardians are described as harassing Mark Antony's troops during their withdrawal after the unsuccessful siege of Phraaspa; in Tac. *Ann.* 14.23 we hear of Corbulo's troops marching from Artaxata down to Tigranokerta and being attacked by the Mardians. Generally speaking, both actions can be located in the modern region of Vaspurakan, north-east of Lake Van.¹²¹ This location could be enhanced by the fact that the name of a later Armenian province, *Mardastan*, is derived from the Greek ethnonym Μάρδοι, and this province was located east of Lake Van.¹²² To conclude, Ptolemy's Gordyene lies south of the sources of the Tigris and south of Lake Van.

Data gleaned from the geographical and ethnographical accounts of Strabo, Pliny the Elder, and Ptolemy allows us to sketch the approximate location of ancient Gordyene. In the most general terms, Gordyene was located between the Tigris (that is, the Tigris course past Çattepe/Tilli) and Lake Van (*Geog.* 11.14.8, 16.1.21; Pliny the Elder *HN* 6.43–44, 6.129; *Geogr.* 5.12.19). To be more precise, the mountains inhabited by the Gordyaeans were located alongside the Bohtan (Bitlis) River and upriver of its junction with the main course

115 Markwart 1930, *11.

116 Russell 1985, 453.

117 Garsoïan 1989, 473; Minorsky 1940, 150; Hewsén 1982, 115.

118 Andreas 1894, 1492–1493; Weissbach 1930b, 1648–1651; Gregoratti 2014, 76–85.

119 Weissbach 1930b, 1648–1651.

120 Weissbach 1930b, 1648–1651; Syme 1995, 31, n. 25.

121 Syme 1995, 31.

122 Hübschmann 1904, 207, 239, n. 2 and 343–344.

of the Tigris (*Geog.* 2.1.26). This means that the mountains north of modern Cizre (roughly between Cizre and Siirt) suit this data best (*Geog.* 2.1.26 and *Xen. Anab.* 3.4.10–12; 3.5.13–16; 4.1.1–9). Although the mountains inhabited by the Gordyaeans were located south of Armenia *proper*, they could also be geographically categorized as belonging to the massif of the Armenian Mountains in general (*Geog.* 2.1.26 and *Geogr.* 5.12.2). The Gordyaeans also occupied the Tigris valley after the junction of the Bohtan and Tigris rivers (*Geog.* 16.1.24, and so not only the mountains as in Xenophon). In the open Tigris valley, the Gordyaeans were exposed to the nomadic tribes of the Upper Mesopotamia (*Geog.* 16.1.1 and 16.1.8; Pliny the Elder *HN* 6.43–44, 6.129) and were neighbored, further down the course of the Tigris, by the Adiabeni (*Geog.* 16.1.1 and 16.1.8; Pliny the Elder, *HN* 6.43–44, 6.129). The contact with Mesopotamian nomadic tribes may have contributed to connection made by ancient writers between Gordyene and the Masion Mountains.

4.5 Plutarch

Some data concerning the historical geography of Gordyene can also be obtained through a critical reading of historiographical accounts. First and foremost, the topic of Gordyene appears prominently in ancient accounts in the context of the Mithridatic Wars (Plutarch, *Luc.* 21–36, *Pomp.* 30–36; Diod. 40.1; Appian, *Mith.* 105; Cass. Dio 37.5.3–4), especially with regard to Lucullus' and Pompey's campaigns during the 3rd Mithridatic War (74 or 73–63 BC) against Tigranes II (the Great), who conquered Gordyene and killed its king, Zarbienes (see also below).

Plutarch's *Lucullus* 29–30 is of special importance for the historical geography of Gordyene, as it describes the wintering of Roman legions in the region. Specifically, Lucullus, having captured Tigranokerta, let his troops winter in Gordyene before they set out for the campaign in the heart of the Armenian kingdom; after the winter camp they made their way directly from Gordyene to the Armenian capital, Artashat.¹²³ Provided that Tigranokerta can be located east of the Batman River, especially in Arzan,¹²⁴ which seems to be the most likely option in the present state of research,¹²⁵ the nearest area where

123 Eckhardt 1910a, 113–114; Eckhardt 1910b, 202–203; Syme 1995, 55.

124 Sinclair 1994–1995; Sinclair 1994–1995; Marciak 2014d; Marciak 2016a; Marciak 2017.

125 For more recent overviews of all possible identifications, see Chaumont 1982; Plontke-Lüning 2002; Marciak 2016a. The identification of Tigranokerta with Arzan has been accepted, among others, by Hewsens 1985, 75–78; Traina 2010b, 99; Redgate 2000, 84; Hewsens 2001, 56; Comfort 2009, 284; Marciak 2016a.

Lucullus' troops could find rest is located east of the Garzan River and on the north (east) bank of the Tigris (note that at this point Nisibis still had an Armenian garrison).¹²⁶ This in turn raises the question as to whether we should not see the territory of the kingdom of Gordyene (ruled by Zarbienes, but conquered by Tigranes II) as expanded east over the Bohtan River (which was the border of the land of the Karduchoi in Xenophon's times) into the territory of what later became known as Arzanene (for Arzanene, see below). This identification is all the more likely if we take account of the fact that the Bitlis Pass, the major gateway from the Upper Tigris region to the heart of the Armenian kingdom, could be reached the easiest from the territory of Arzanene.¹²⁷ The Bitlis route was also convenient for larger groups; what is more, it offered several off-branches along the course, which could be vital if the Armenians tried to block any canyon.¹²⁸ To sum up so, the most probable location of the winter camp of the Roman legion under Lucullus is the territory on the north bank of the Tigris marked by the Batman or the Garzan River to the west.¹²⁹ It is not entirely clear where to place, so to speak, the eastern end of the territory where the Romans wintered in their camps. The eastern border of Gordyene appears to be marked by the Assyrian Khabur River in the southeast,¹³⁰ but it is unlikely from the military point of view that the Romans would spread their regions over such a great distance. The most formidable natural barrier to the east was the junction of the Bitlis River and the nearby mountainous terrain in the east; thus, it appears that the Romans wintered within the borders of the later province of Arzanene—between the Batman and Bitlis rivers.

126 Eckhardt 1910a, 113–114; Eckhardt 1910b, 202–203. If one prefers the identification of Tigranokerta with Martyropolis, then the Kulp pass also comes into play, although this would imply a longer track if not a sort of detour. Eckhardt 1910b, 202–203 speaks about a third possibility—a route around the southern rim of Lake Van into the Bayazıd valley. But from the Upper Tigris Valley one would still have to use the Bitlis pass first to reach Lake Van.

127 Chaumont 1982; Hewsen 2001, 56.

128 Eckhardt 1910b, 202–206; Syme 1995, 55.

129 The question is whether the territory between the Batman River and the Bohtan River (which later became known as Arzanene) can be seen as a scion of Sophene or that of Gordyene. On the one hand, ethnographical and geographical texts rather locate the core of Gordyene east and south of the Bohtan River. On the other hand, Plutarch's description speaks in favor of Gordyene as stretching further west over the Bohtan River at the time of the Third Mithridatic War. Arzanene was also located closer to the core of Gordyene (understood as the area east of the Bohtan River) than the core of Sophene (its eastern border most likely ended on the western Tigris in Plutarch's text).

130 This is the eastern border of the territory of Gordyene according to M. Hartmann 1897, 91; Nöldeke 1898, 73; Honigsmann 1936, 1014.

4.6 Arrian, Cassius Dio and *Tabula Peutingeriana*

Another important topic concerning the historical geography of Gordyene which features predominantly in historiographical accounts is that of the Gordyaeen Mountains. In view of the above-mentioned Greek and Latin ethnographies (*Geog.* 2.1.26; *Geogr.* 5.12.2, as well as *Xen. Anab.* 3.4.10–12; 3.5.13–16; 4.1.1–9), the mountains inhabited by the Gordyaeans can most likely be identified as a mountain range north of modern Cizre (stretching till the Bohtan River). In turn, in historiographical accounts the Gordyaeen Mountains are recalled on the occasion of the crossing of the Tigris by foreign armies—Alexander the Great against Dareios III of Persia in 331 BCE and Trajan against Parthia in 115 CE. According to Arrian (*Anab.* 3.7.7), when Alexander's troops crossed the Tigris and marched into Assyria, they had the mountains of the Gordyaeans (τὰ Γορδυηνῶν ὄρη) on their left hand. In turn, Trajan's troops advanced from Nisibis towards the Tigris and crossed the “stream opposite the Gordyaeen Mountains” (κατὰ τὸ Καρδύηνον ὄρος in *Cass. Dio* 68.26.1–2).¹³¹ Both historical accounts are of great importance as they show that Gordyene had some international importance because of its geopolitical location as it straddled at least one important communication line, famously used by Alexander the Great and Trajan.

The importance of Gordyene as the country where one could find a convenient crossing of the Tigris is also reflected in the *Peutinger Table*. Namely, the PT knows the route from Nisibis to “Ad flumen Tigrim” which further continues on to Belnar (Arbela) and consequently paves the way for travelers to Ctesiphon.¹³² Two stations mentioned between Nisibis and “Ad flumen Tigrim” are *Sarbane* and *Sapha*. *Sarbane* is widely identified with modern Sirvan, located 39 km east of Nisibis, on linguistic grounds (resemblance of names—*Sarbane*, *Sisauranon* recalled by Prokopios (east of Nisibis) and modern Sirvan).¹³³ Considerable amounts of archaeological data (remains of Roman walls and, possibly, paving) also strengthen this identification.¹³⁴ In turn, the identification of *Sapha* is less certain.¹³⁵ Two identifications have been suggested: the village Safan (now extinct) located 42 km to the east of *Sarbane*,¹³⁶

¹³¹ The text and translation used here is that of Cary 1925.

¹³² Miller 1916, 772.

¹³³ Dillemann 1962, 160; Sinclair 1989, 372; Talbert 2000, 1278; Comfort 2009, 111–112.

¹³⁴ See Comfort 2009, 111–112.

¹³⁵ See Comfort 2009, 112.

¹³⁶ Dillemann 1962, 160. See also Dillemann's references to Maunsell 1903, 26, 139, 432.

and the nearby Assyrian ruins at the village Kebeli (once Babil).¹³⁷ In this light, it is evident that PT's route from Nisibis aimed at reaching the Tigris, generally speaking, in the vicinity of the modern Turkish-Syrian-Iraqi border.¹³⁸ This location corresponds very well with Arrian's and Dio's general references to the crossing of the Tigris opposite the Gordyaeon Mountains.

Where to find the locations where Alexander the Great and Trajan crossed the Tigris? Taking a route in ancient times depended a lot on the natural environment, and the Mesopotamian region allowed only a limited number of routes that were accessible to merchants, travelers, and ancient armies. At the same time, it should be noted that (unlike mountain passes) courses of rivers undergo natural changes. Consequently, the best way to attempt identifications of ancient river crossings is either to find clear-cut attestations in literary sources or to located remains of settlements and structures (especially strongholds, cities, as well as bridges and Roman pavements) that may have functioned in connection with the nearby river crossings.

Scholars have suggested three possible points of the Tigris crossing in its course between the Bohtan and the Great Zab rivers: Eski Finik/Eski Hendek, Cizre, and Faysh Khabur. First, the crossing at Eski Finik/Eski Hendek may be suggested because of the presence of remains of a complex of fortresses on both banks of the river (see also below): the site on the west bank has been identified as the Roman fortress, Bezabde, and the structures on the east bank as Gordyene's main stronghold, Pinaka. What is more, the area is located close to the Kazrik gorge, which led through the mountains of the Karduchoi. Second, Roman Bezabde has been long thought to lie under (or in the vicinity of) modern Cizre.¹³⁹ Even as this identification does not appear to be valid any longer, the fact is that several bridge remains have been reported from the immediate vicinity of Cizre,¹⁴⁰ two of which were probably ancient—one Late-Roman (known locally as Telkabin Köprüsü),¹⁴¹ and another medieval but possibly built upon a Sasanian predecessor.¹⁴² When it comes to Faysh Khabur, ruins of a Roman bridge were reported to have been found in the 19th century.¹⁴³

137 Lehmann-Haupt 1910, 442; Sinclair 1989, 372; Talbert 2000, 1278.

138 Comfort 2009, 108.

139 For an overview, see Lightfoot 1983.

140 See Poidebard 1934, 159; Dillemann 1962, pl. x1 facing page 130; Sinclair 1989, 356; Comfort 2009, 78–79.

141 Sinclair 1989, 256; Comfort 2009, 78–79.

142 Lightfoot 1983, 193; Comfort 2009, 78–79; Dillemann 1962, pl. x1 facing page 130.

143 Czernick 1875–76, 44–45, pl. 16. This identification is accepted by Dillemann 1962, 161 and Comfort 2009, 359, n. 218.

Besides this, the main evidence for its use as the crossing point comes from Sasanian sources, which referred to it as Pir-Šabur (meaning Old Shapur).¹⁴⁴

It appears to be a matter of conjecture to decide as to which of these nearby crossing points were used by specific historical figures Alexander the Great and Trajan. Only in the case of the Greek army of “the Ten Thousand” mentioned by Xenophon did the idea that they reached a dead end between the Tigris and the Tauros point to the crossing (which they did not use) located farthest upstream, that is, possibly the crossing near Eski Finik/Eski Hendek.

4.7 Ammianus Marcellinus, *Notitia Dignitatum* and *Descriptio Orbis Romani*

Gordyene again appears in the context of the Roman-Persian wars in the late third and fourth centuries CE, when the territory of Northern Mesopotamia changed hands several times between the two empires. To be precise, in Ammianus’ *Historia Romana* composed in the fourth century CE, where we can find three references to *Corduena*—18.6.20, 23.3.5 and 25.7.8–9—all made by Ammianus as an eye-witness to Roman-Persian military campaigns in the 350–360s. The people of *Karduene* are also mentioned by Petros Patrikios, who wrote retrospectively in the sixth century CE about the main points of the 298 CE Roman-Persian peace treaty.

The backdrop of Ammianus’ report in 18.6.20 is connected with Ammianus’ scouting mission, which took place on the eve of the Persian invasion in 359 CE which reached the Roman fortress Amida.¹⁴⁵ As Roman commanders wanted to know the route of the Persian invasion, and the intelligence they had received was not clear-cut, they sent Ammianus on a scouting mission to the satrapy of Corduena, gained by the Romans in 298 CE but lost to the Persians during the first stage of the war.¹⁴⁶ In 18.6.20 we read that Ammianus went to *Iovinianus*, the satrap in “... *Corduena*, which was subject to the Persian power ...”. Ammianus says that he reached *Iovinianus* “over pathless mountains and through steep defiles”. After the first meeting *Iovinianus* supplied Ammianus with an attendant who knew the country and sent them to “some lofty cliffs a long distance from there, from which, unless one’s eyesight was impaired, even the smallest object was visible at a distance of fifty miles”. From

¹⁴⁴ Maricq 1958, 356; Dillemann 1962, 161.

¹⁴⁵ Matthews 1989, 42–44. Ammianus’ text used here is that of Rolfe 1935.

¹⁴⁶ De Jonge 1980, 206; Matthews 1989, 42–44.

this location Ammianus was able to secretly observe the march of the Persian army which crossed the *Anzaba* (Great Zab) and went past Nineveh (18.7.1).

Where exactly could Ammianus have been located to offer such a good and informative view? On the one hand, we must observe that “we cannot expect to know exactly where Ammianus stood to get his view”, as “a glance a relief map will show that in every sector of their northern and eastern limits these wide plains are overlooked by such commanding vantage points”.¹⁴⁷ On the other, some mountain ridges are located closer to Nineveh and the Great Zab than others—especially the mountains of the Zakhō north-east of Nineveh could be a vantage point from where one could easily survey the valley around Nineveh and the Great Zab.¹⁴⁸

In turn, in 23.3.5 Ammianus recalls *Corduena* while reporting on the early days of Emperor Julian’s invasion of the Sassanid territory in 363 CE. Namely, Julian decided to divide his forces and to send part of his troops under the generals Procopius and Sebastianus to join the Armenian king, Arsaces in engaging the Persians in northern Mesopotamia.¹⁴⁹ The forces were expected to march through *Corduena*, *Moxoena* and Median *Chiliocomum* before meeting Julian’s troops in Assyria. The opinions on the identification of *Chiliocomum* (mentioned also in Amm. Marc. 24.8.4, meaning *thousand villages*¹⁵⁰) differ considerably among scholars:¹⁵¹ not in Media but south of Corduena in Assyria;¹⁵² north of Corduena;¹⁵³ in the Great Zab basin,¹⁵⁴ in the plain of Salmas north of the Lake Urmia.¹⁵⁵ If Moxoena is to be located north(east) of Corduena (which can also be argued on other grounds—see below), then the area between Lake Van and Lake Urmia, especially the plain of Salmas, could be a likely option.¹⁵⁶ If this identification is correct, *Chiliocomum* would indeed be located in Media Atropatene (as Ammianus calls it, unlike scholars

147 Matthews 1989, 48.

148 Matthews 1989, 50.

149 Den Boeft, Drijvers, den Hengst, Teitler 1998, 41–42.

150 See Dillemann’s suggestion (Dillemann 1962, 301 relying on Markwart 1930, 396–397) for the Iranian origin of *Chiliocomum*.

151 See Tomaschek 1899, 2278; Hübschmann 1904, 259, 338; Dillemann 1962, 300–301; den Boeft, Drijvers, den Hengst, Teitler 1998, 44; den Boeft, Drijvers, den Hengst, Teitler 2002, 221–222, 229–231; Mosig-Walburg 2009, 130, n. 563.

152 Rolfe 1940, 322, n. 3; Brok 1959, 59.

153 Seyfarth 1970, 222, n. 23; Dignas, Winter, 132, n. 66.

154 Fontaine 1977b, 29, n. 58.

155 Dillemann 1962, 301.

156 Dillemann 1962, 301; Fontaine 1977b, 29, n. 58; Den Boeft, Drijvers, den Hengst, Teitler 1998, 44.

who correct his expression as “Assyria”) and on the outskirts of the two other regions: Armenia and Assyria, which would make some sense in terms of the Roman strategy in 363 CE.¹⁵⁷

Lastly, in 25.7.9 Ammianus describes territorial negotiations in 363 CE between Emperor Jovian and the Persians after the death of the Roman Emperor Julian.¹⁵⁸ Ammianus recalls that the Persians demanded that the Romans hand over five Roman *Transtigritane* (“on the far side of the Tigris”) regions: *Arzanena*, *Moxoena*, *Zabdicena*, *Rehimena* and *Corduena* with fifteen fortresses,¹⁵⁹ as well as *Nisibis*, *Singara*, and *Castra Maurorum*. Ammianus’ list of regions lost by Rome to the Persians is partly parallel to Petros Patrikios’ list that names territories gained by the Romans from the Persians in 298 CE: Intelene, Sophene, Arzanene, [the territories] of the *Karduenoi* and *Zabdikene* (τὴν Ἰντηληνὴν μετὰ Σοφηνῆς καὶ Ἀρζανηνὴν μετὰ Καρδουηνῶν καὶ Ζαβδικηνῆς). What is more, another parallel list appears in the acts of the council of the Assyrian Church at Seleucia-Ctesiphon in 410 CE (Canon XXI) where the bishops of *Arzanene*, *Karduene*, *Zabdikene*, *Rehimene* and *Moxoene* were subjected to the church metropolis of Nisibis.¹⁶⁰

As we already know that the lists handed down by Ammianus and Petros Patrikios do not have to literally match up, that is, after 363 CE, the Romans kept the territories west of the Batman River, while only the territories east of this river were incorporated into the Sasanian kingdom. However, another remarkable problem comes to the fore: the names of the territories located east of the Batman River that appear in both lists are still different. Namely, in Ammianus and the Acts of the Seleucia-Ctesiphon Council we find *Moxoena*/*Moxoene* and *Rehimena*/*Rehimene*, which are not listed in Petros Patrikios. The appearance of new entities east of the Batman River in the 363 CE peace treaty, *Moxoena* and *Rehimena* (and later in the council acts), could perhaps be explained by the fact that they were subsumed in 298 CE under a larger ethno-geographical or/and political entity, especially under *Corduena*.¹⁶¹ Indeed, Petros Patrikios uses the plural *Καρδουηνῶν*, which can be seen as the plural genitive and consequently translated as “of the *Karduenoi*.” Thus, Petros literally speaks of [the territories] inhabited (or politically dependent on) by the

157 Fontaine 1977b, 29, n. 58; Den Boeft, Drijvers, den Hengst, Teitler 1998, 44.

158 Ammianus’ text used here is that of Rolfe 1940.

159 It is not entirely clear whether these fortresses were located in all five provinces (Blockley 1984, 44, n. 41) or only in Corduene (Toumanoff 1963, 181).

160 Mosig-Walburg 2009, 128.

161 Syme 1995, 56, n. 42; Mosig-Walburg 2009, 136–137.

Karduenoi, which could include a number of various territories, e.g. Moxoena and Rehimena.¹⁶²

What can be said about the locations of Ammianus' and Petros Patrikios' toponyms and ethnonyms east of the Batman River? Precisely in Amm. Marc. 25.7.9 the toponym *Arzanena* appears for the first time in ancient sources.¹⁶³ However, it is later mentioned in Byzantine and Armenian sources;¹⁶⁴ for instance, according to Prokopios of Caesarea, *Arzanena* was located east of the *Nymphios* River, which accounted for the border between Rome and Persia in the 6th century CE.¹⁶⁵ In turn, Armenian sources know both the province *Atjnik'* (the Greek Ἀρζανηνή and Latin *Arzanena*) and the smaller district *Arzn* (within *Atjnik'*) with its main city, *Arzan*.¹⁶⁶ If the *Nymphios* can be identified, as frequently suggested, with the Batman River,¹⁶⁷ then *Arzanene* can be located east of this river.¹⁶⁸ Like *Arzanene*, *Moxoena* does not appear in ancient sources until Ammianus (Amm. Marc. 23.3.5 and 25.7.9), but it is well-known to Armenian sources as the province *Mokk'* located east of *Arzanene* in the Tauros Mountains.¹⁶⁹ Hübschmann suggests that the name of the ancient *Mokk'* is preserved in the name of a modern village, Möks on the Möks River, a northern tributary of the Bohtan River.¹⁷⁰ This would suggest the location of *Moxoena* in the mountainous region north of the Bohtan River.¹⁷¹

The location of the province of *Zabdikene* is problematic because we do not have precise clues for its geographical situation. First of all, Ammianus mentions *Zabdicena* among the *regiones Transtigritanae*, which essentially implies its location on the east bank of the Tigris. Furthermore, some idea about its location could perhaps be gained from the order of enumeration of the *regiones Transtigritanae* in ancient sources. This approach could be helpful only if such enumerations of the *regiones Transtigritanae* proceeded in a good

162 Blockley 1984, 41, n. 19; Mosig-Walburg 2009, 125.

163 Dillemann 1962, 121. Unless Pliny the Elder's *Archene* (HN 6.128) or the Assyrian *Alzi* (Chaldean *Alzis*) can be associated with *Arzanene*. However, both identifications are not very likely (see Baumgartner 1896, 1948; Hübschmann 1904, 248–249).

164 Baumgartner 1896, 1498; Dillemann 1962, 121–123.

165 For *Arzanene* in the late sixth century, see Whitby 1983, 205–218.

166 Hübschmann 1904, 248–251 (esp. 250), 305–306, 310–312.

167 Lehmann-Haupt 1926, 400; Markwart 1930, 82; Honigsmann 1935, 5; Dillemann 1962, 48–49, 253–254; Blockley 1984, 31–32; Wheeler 1991, 506; Talbert 2000, 1277; Kaegi 2003, 131.

168 Dillemann 1962, 121–123; Syme 1995, 56.

169 Hübschmann 1904, 254–255.

170 Hübschmann 1904, 255.

171 Hübschmann 1904, 255.

geographical order. Generally speaking (see also below), Zabdikene is usually paired with Gordyene in this context.

Some additional clues can perhaps be gained from Zabdikene's relation to the city Bezabde. Namely, it has been argued that the name of Zabdikene is linguistically related to the name of the city Bezabde. More precisely, the name of province is believed to derive from the name of the city.¹⁷² The existence of the linguistic connection between the two toponyms is also supported by Ammianus' statement that the Roman fortress of Bezabde was defended in 360 CE by three Roman legions and a *local* unit of archers called *Sagittari Zabdiceni* (Amm. 20.7.1).¹⁷³ Where was, then, Bezabde located?

The city Bezabde appears in ancient sources on the occasion of Persian and Roman campaigns in the Tigris region.¹⁷⁴ Generally speaking, we can infer from Ammianus' descriptions of Shapur II's and Constantinus' attacks on Bezabde that it was located east of Amida (20.11.5–6) and east of Nisibis (20.7.1). More specifically, according to Ammianus (20.7.1), it was placed on a hill of moderate height that sloped towards the banks of the Tigris. Besides the details mentioned above, we are not provided with any more detailed clues as to the location of the Roman fortress of Bezabde.

Many scholars have pointed to modern Cizre and its vicinity as the probable location of ancient Bezabde.¹⁷⁵ To be precise, both the city of Cizre itself¹⁷⁶ and the area located some three km south of the modern city¹⁷⁷ were suggested as the locations of the ancient settlement of Bezabde. However, in the case of Cizre, nothing is known of ancient remains of a settlement in its vicinity, as the area has not been subjected to archaeological investigation. Extant remains of

172 Fraenkel 1897, 378; M. Streck 1903, 250; Treidler 1967b, 2201. At the same time, Treidler 1967b, 2203 suggests the connection between the name Zabdikene and that of the rivers Zabs.

173 Lightfoot 1983, 189.

174 It has also been discussed as to whether the name Bezabde is not connected with two toponyms known from Ptolemy and Plutarch (Luc. 22): Σάπφη and Σαφά respectively. Yet, the two forms may also be connected with Ammianus' Thilsaphata (25.8.16), located by M. Hartmann 1897, 101 50 km east of Nisibis. See M. Streck 1903, 250; Treidler 1967b, 2202.

175 Fraenkel 1897, 379; M. Streck 1903, 250; Lightfoot 1983 (south of Cizre); Dignas, Winter 2007, 127, map 8).

176 Fraenkel 1897, 379; M. Streck 1903, 250; Nöldeke 1898, 76–77, n. 4; Treidler 1967b, 2202–2203.

177 M. Hartmann 1897, 98–99; Markwart 1931, 158; Fiey 1977, 161; Lightfoot 1983. The reason to suggest another settlement south of Cizre was the existence of an old bridge there. The aforementioned scholars rightly concluded that the two places should be treated separately and the bridge which must have served another settlement located in its immediate vicinity (and not as far as in Cizre).

possibly ancient bridges (Roman and Sasanian) may be indicative of a nearby settlement, but nothing tangible can be said about it in the current state of research.

Recently, G. Algaze¹⁷⁸ pointed to the ruins on both sides of the Tigris at Eski Hendek and Eski Finik that are some 13 km northwest of Cizre.¹⁷⁹ These structures do include some Roman masonry and have been identified as the remains of an unusually large Roman castellum (see below). What is more, this identification can explain Ammianus' statements that Bezabde was earlier called Phaenicha (20.7.1; as well as his manner of interchangeably calling this fortress Bezabde and Phaenicha, see 20.7.16).¹⁸⁰ Namely, Ammianus' Phaenicha likely goes back to Strabo's Pinaka,¹⁸¹ which for linguistic reasons can most likely be identified as the modern Eski Finik (on the east bank and right opposite Eski Hendek).¹⁸² Thus, it appears that Ammianus' references to Bezabde as Phaenicha "were influenced by the existence of the larger and older settlement of Pinaka on the other side of the river."¹⁸³

If ancient Zabdikene included Bezabde, located at least partly on the west bank of the Tigris, the question arises as to how Zabdikene can be counted among the *regiones Transtigritanae* (that is, located beyond [=east of] the Tigris)? The location of Zabdikene only on the west bank of the Tigris¹⁸⁴ contradicts the idea of the *regiones Transtigritanae*. In this respect it has been suggested that the problem could be alleviated if Zabdikene straddled the Tigris, that is, it lay on both sides of the Tigris.¹⁸⁵ However, if Zabdikene included the area around Eski Finik on the east bank of the Tigris, it means that in the fourth century CE Zabdikene (a geopolitical entity attested very late in the sources)

178 Following an earlier suggestion by G. Bell 1911, 296–297, n. 1. which she did not however later develop and finally spoke in in favor of Cizre as ancient Bezabde.

179 Algaze 1989, 249–252.

180 Instead of assuming like Dillemann 1962, 84–84 that Ammianus confused the two places by relying on a second-hand résumé of the *Geography* of Strabo.

181 Algaze 1989, 249–252; Söylemez, Lightfoot 1991, 319.

182 Algaze 1989, 251–252.

183 Söylemez, Lightfoot 1991, 319.

184 Hübschmann 1904, 220, n. 3 and 321; Fiey 1977, 161.

185 Treidler 1967b, 2203; Blockley 1984, 35. Another question is on which bank of the Tigris the city lay. Most scholars locate Bezabde on the west bank of the Tigris (Hoffmann 1880, 24, n. 177; Fraenkel 1897, 379; M. Streck 1903, 250; Treidler 1967b, 2202–2203), but some—on the east bank. Remarkably, Treidler 1967b, 2203 speaks of "der Schwerpunkt der Zabdicene auf dem linken Ufer des Tigris," but allows the existence of at least "Stadteil östlich des Tigris." It must be noted that the sources are not precise on this point (likewise Mosig-Walburg 2009, 139).

occupied the area that was once the heartland of the kingdom of Gordyene. In this sense, Zabdikene appears to be a scion of a very important part of ancient Gordyene.

The next controversial question is as to whether Gordyene or Zabdikene was the easternmost region of the *Transtigritani*. Although Zabdikene figures as the last country on the list of Petros Patrikios, which suggests that it was the easternmost region acquired by Rome from Persia in 298 CE,¹⁸⁶ the order given by Ammianus in 25.7.9 (while describing the 363 CE peace treaty) has Gordyene in the same place (instead of Zabdikene in Petros). What is more, the acts of the council of the Assyrian Church at Seleucia-Ctesiphon in 410 CE (Canon XXI which lists bishops in the region) has a totally different order—Zabdikene comes after Gordyene but before Rehimene and Moxoene. Thus, it appears that the order of such enumerations cannot be the only premise for geographical location of countries in question. It has instead been suggested that the context of Ammianus' narrative about his scouting mission to the region (when Ammianus goes up to a vantage point from which he could easily see the city of Nineveh, described as belonging to Adiabene) suggests that it was *Corduena* that directly bordered on Adiabene in ca. 359 CE. Consequently, Gordyene was the easternmost province of the *Transtigritani*.¹⁸⁷ To conclude, it appears that we must state that there is no fully satisfactory answer to the problem of the location of *Zabdikene* in relation to *Corduena*.¹⁸⁸

Moxoene appears in ancient sources for the first time in Ammianus (Amm. Marc. 23.3.5 and 25.7.9).¹⁸⁹ However, neither Ammianus nor other later sources provide any topographical or geographical clues for its location (e.g. Zosimos 3.31.1). The only possibility of establishing its location is provided by Armenian sources, which know of the province named *Mokk'* located east of *Aljnik'* (Arzanene).¹⁹⁰ It appears that the name of this province has been preserved until modern times in the local toponym, *Möks*, the name of a modern village

186 This position of Zabdikene is clearly followed by Hauser 2003, 660 and Dignas, Winter 2007, 31, map 3; and apparently—by Blockley 1984, 35 and Dodgeon, Lieu 1991, 377, nn. 48–49. In turn, Dillemann 1962, 110 makes a general remark that Zabdikene was located within Gordyene and its borders were «*insaisissables, peut-être même indéfinissables*». However, it should be noted that both Gordyene and Zabdikene are recalled as separate administrative entities by Petros Patrikios, Ammianus and the Church councils.

187 Mosig-Walburg 2009, 139.

188 Marciak 2012b, 205. Likewise Nogaret 1984, 259 and n. 10.

189 For Moxoena, see Hübschmann 1904, 254–255; and Hewsens 1992, 168–169 who also attempts to list older non-Armenian equivalents of the toponym in question which is however not always successful. The most probable connection is that to the tribe known from Pliny the Elder *HN* 6.28 as *Moscheni*. See Schachermeyr 1931, 409.

190 Hübschmann 1904, 254–255.

and of a nearby river, a northern tributary of the Bohtan River.¹⁹¹ This suggests the location of Moxoene in the mountainous region south of Lake Van and north of the Bohtan River.¹⁹²

The question arises as to whether or not the territory of Moxoene was implicitly included in the 298 CE peace treaty. Many scholars believe so, but they disagree as to whether or not Moxoene was subsumed under Arzanene or Gordyene.¹⁹³ Given the fact that Moxoene itself is not explicitly named by Petros Patrikios (and apparently subsumed under another entity), only the second option is possible.¹⁹⁴ This solution also appears to be better in geographical terms: like Gordyene, Moxoene was a mountainous region, close to Lake Van, and some ancient geographers saw this area, in their very general outlook, as connected with Gordyene.¹⁹⁵

The location of Rehimene is very unclear. This toponym is unknown to Armenian sources. The only sources that refer to this country are Ammianus (25.7.9), Zosimos (3.31.1 as Ῥημηνοί), and the acts of the Assyrian Church council at Seleucia-Ctesiphon 410 CE (Canon XXI).¹⁹⁶ Yet neither sources provides specific clues concerning its location. All we know, following Ammianus, is that the region belonged to the *Transtigritani* and was likely located in the vicinity of Gordyene.

Scholars have attempted to solve the enigma of Rehimene's location by suggesting several possible locations. Hübschmann pointed to the area marked by the junction of the Tigris and Bohtan rivers,¹⁹⁷ Hewsen in turn suggested the vicinity of Nisibis,¹⁹⁸ while Sinclair tentatively located Rehimene in the valley stretching from the modern Eskieruh towards the Bohtan River.¹⁹⁹ The last

191 Hübschmann 1904, 255; Schachermeyr 1931, 409; Hewsen 1992, 168. It also appears later as an Ottoman *kaza* located 99 km south of Lake Van. See Fiey 1977, 185.

192 Kiepert 1878, 80; Hübschmann 1904, 255; Schachermeyr 1931, 409; Hewsen 1992, 168; See Fiey 1977, 185.

193 See Adontz, Garsoïan 1970, 36; Bury 1958, 93, n. 3; Winter 1989, 556.

194 Another possibility was raised by Blockley 1984, 35 who suggests that Moxoena was not included in the 298 CE peace treaty, but may have transferred allegiance to the Romans sometime after 298 CE.

195 Schachermeyr 1931, 409; Mosig-Walburg 2009, 125, 135–136.

196 See also Guidi 1889, 409.

197 Hübschmann 1904, 321–322.

198 Hewsen 1988–1989, 295–296, n. 56.

199 Sinclair 1989, 366–367: part of Corduene looking towards the Bohtan River, starting northwards from the watershed going west from the Tigris-Bohtan junction (the present kaza of Eruh, then centered on the place now called Eskieruh). Remarkably, Hewsen 1992, 344 reports Sinclair's private communication—given the fact that the Armenian sound for the English 'j' and the French 'dj' "causes a problem in Classical languages, he [Sinclair]

identification must be seen as very tentative, but in general it suits the only two pieces of evidence we have—the location east of the Tigris and a connection with Gordyene.

To summarize, historiographical accounts confirm or supplement our data gained from geographical and ethnographical sources. First, the mountains inhabited by the Gordyaeans were indeed located in the area north of Cizre (approximately between Cizre and Siirt). Second, Plutarch's report on the Roman Army under Lucullus shows that the kingdom of Gordyene (unlike Gordyene in Xenophon, Strabo, Pliny the Elder and Ptolemy) had expanded west of the Bohtan River by 95 BCE, and included much of the territory that later became known as Arzanene. Third, the available sources concerning the third and fourth centuries CE show a remarkable process of geopolitical or administrative distinction. We hear of Arzanene east of the Batman River and west of Bohtan (Bitlis) River, and when it comes the area between the Bohtan (Bitlis) River, Lake Van and the Tigris, it is now occupied by several separate geopolitical or administrative entities: Moxoene, Rehimene, Gordyene, and Zabdikene. However, their territorial extent is not always entirely clear, and the relation between Gordyene and Zabdikene is especially problematic.

Ammianus' (25.7.9) bitter comments on Emperor Jovian's decision to give in to Shapur II's territorial demands also reveal that the Romans lost at least 15 anonymous fortresses in the *Transtigritanae regiones* plus Nisibis, Singara, and Castra Maurorum (all the three located in Mesopotamia). However, it is not entirely clear if Ammianus' remark about the 15 fortresses refers only to Gordyene,²⁰⁰ or to all *Transtigritanae regiones* (Arzanena, Moxoena, Zabdicena, Rehimena and Corduena),²⁰¹ or perhaps only to the Roman province of Mesopotamia.²⁰² At any rate, Ammianus complains that, instead of dispatching envoys to the king of Persia, Jovian could have reached the protection

suggests that the River Jerm, which gave its name to the district of Ĵermajor, and which gave Pliny (6.30,118) his *Zerbis* and *Agathias* (4.29.8) his Zirma, might also have produced a basic form 'ERM' upon which Syrian Beth Rehime and GK Rehim-ênē (both for the district) might have been based". Hewsens 1992, 344 appears to be close to accepting Sinclair's linguistic observation but he thinks that it should lead to a different geographical identification—Rehimene was not located in the valley of the Jerm, but in the valley of the Zerva which includes a village called *Rehina*. Sinclair's description (1989, 366–367) of Rehimene is not entirely clear to the present author, but the hint at Eskieruh suggests something very close to Hewsens's idea (Hewsens 1992, 344).

200 Toumanoff 1963, 181.

201 Honigmann 1935, 5–6; Chrysos 1993, 176; Blockley 1984, 44, n. 4.

202 Dillemann 1962, 218–220; Mosig-Walburg 2009, 308.

of Corduena (*praesidia Corduenae*), a rich region (*uber regio*) that would have given him ground in opposing the Persian advance (25.7.8). This clearly shows that Gordyene played an important role in the Roman system of territorial defense before 363 CE.

Bezabde, apparently the main fortress in Gordyene, is well known from Ammianus' narrative about the Persian campaign in 359 CE, which led to the capture of the fortress. According to Ammianus (20.7.1–18), Bezabde was a very strong fortress situated on a moderate hill sloping towards the banks of the river and enclosed with a double wall. The fortress was defended by three legions (II Flavian, II Armenian, and II Parthian) and a large local unit of bowman. Ammianus also mentions a bishop in Bezabde, which implies the existence of a civilian community next to the legionary base.

Although *Notitia Dignitatum* does not provide us with any information about other fortresses in Gordyene (the document was apparently created after 363 CE when Bezabde was ceded to Persia²⁰³), it mentions a number of Roman troops which were apparently connected with Gordyene: *equites sagittarii Cordueni* (Not. Dig. Oc. 6.40.83), *ala XV Flavia Carduenorum* with *cohors XIV Valeria Zabdenorum Maiocariri* (Not. Dig. Or. 36.34.36). Although it is widely known that ethnic and geographic attributions of names of legions could lose their character over time, a relatively large number of such references indicates that the territory of the Transtigritani in general (see *legiones pseudocomitatenses Transtigritani* in Not. Dig. Or. 7.48.58), and Gordyene in particular, became subject to the recruitment of troops for the Roman Empire.²⁰⁴

Gordyene was not incorporated into the Roman Empire after Rome's successful wars with Persia in 588–589/590 CE. Consequently, it cannot be found among Roman new territorial gains in Armenia and Mesopotamia organized within two new provinces: Mesopotamia (also called Armenia *Quarta*) and the Other Armenia *Quarta* (as revealed through *Descriptio Orbis Romani* 910–965). At the same time, Arzanene became Roman soil and was included in the province of Mesopotamia (Armenia *Quarta*). Interestingly, *Descriptio Orbis Romani* by George of Cyprus explicitly mentions six fortresses for Arzanene: *Aphoumon*, *Aribachon*, *Florianon*, *Daphnoudin*, *Balouos*, and *Samocharton*.²⁰⁵

Concerning the fortresses in Arzanene (see also chapter 1.9), *Aphoumon* has been identified with modern Fum²⁰⁶ or Zercel Kale,²⁰⁷ modern Eskieruh has

203 Comfort 2009, 42.

204 Dillemann 1962, 222; Garsoïan 1998, 259.

205 The edition of Honigmann 1939, 64–65 is followed here. But see also Gelzer 1890, 46–49.

206 Honigmann 1935, 33.

207 Sinclair 1996–1997, 97.

been proposed for *Aribachon*,²⁰⁸ and *Florianon* has been suggested for Zercel Kale, but all of these identifications are uncertain.²⁰⁹ *Balouos* has been identified with Palu, which is likely on linguistic grounds, *Samocharton* is in turn presented by Prokopios as a fortress guarding the Birkleyin pass, and the nearby ruins of a fortress could indeed be those of *Samocharton*.²¹⁰ Finally, the identification of *Daphnoudin* is unknown.²¹¹

Another important fortress partially connected with Arzanene was Cephae, which can be easily identified as today's Hasankeyf on both geographical and linguistic grounds.²¹² This fortress is located on the southern bank of the Tigris. Although Ptolemy (*Geogr.* 5.17.5 as 'Ρεσκίφα), *Notitia Dignitatum* (ND Or. 36 as *Cephae*), and George of Cyprus (*Descriptio Orbis Romani* 913: κάστρον 'Ρισκηφᾶς) locate Cephae in Mesopotamia (the district of Dara according to George of Cyprus), the *Syriac Life of James the Hermit* calls it the chief place of the land of Arzun.²¹³ It appears that Cephae's geographical location on the Tigris between Arzanene and the Mesopotamian plain may have made this city susceptible to connections with both areas.²¹⁴ That this settlement had an important military role is demonstrated in that George of Cyprus calls Riskephas *kastron* and *Notitia Dignitatum* locates *legio 11 Parthica* there [Cephae]. At the same time, ecclesiastical documents also mention the bishop of Cephae in 451 CE (ACO II, ii(2), p. 69 [161] § 109–114; likewise the *Notitia Antiochena* created after 570 CE), which implies that there must have been a considerable Roman civilian settlement next to the Roman fortress.

4.8 Armenian Sources

Gordyene also appears in various Armenian sources in which, as it has been argued most recently and exhaustively by R. Hewsén, one can find a great variety of linguistic forms used for the region of Gordyene (*Korduk'*, *Kordik'*, *Korčĕk'*, *Korčayk'*, and *Tmorik'*).²¹⁵ However, it should be stressed that *Korčĕk'*

208 Talbert 2000, 1270.

209 Comfort 2009, 226.

210 Comfort 2009, 226.

211 Comfort 2009, 226.

212 Honigsmann 1935, 12; Dillemann 1962, 228–229; Sinclair 1989, 235; Comfort 2009, 63.

213 Matthews 1989, 54.

214 Likewise Comfort 2009, 63.

215 Prior to Hewsén's contribution, important treatments of these toponyms can be found in Hübschmann 1904, 255–259 and 333–337; Toumanoff 1963, 181–182 and Adontz, Garsoïan 1970, 323. The main points made by Hewsén 1988–89 were again summarized in Hewsén

and *Korčayk'* are not linguistically akin to the root *Kardū*²¹⁶ (in *Καρδοῦχοι*, *Cordu-eni*, *Cordu-ena*, *Γορδυ-ηνή*, *Γορδυ-αία*, *Γορδυ-αίοι*, etc., see also below).²¹⁷ *Kordik'* is also doubtful as a parallel to *Qardū*—it can also be derived from the same root as the *Κύρτιοι*.²¹⁸ In this light, the Armenian sources with information about *Korčēk'*, *Korčayk'*, and *Kordrik'* rather mirror the expansion of the post-Cyrti or proto-Kurdish tribes than contribute directly to our study on Gordyene (for *Tmorik'*, see below).²¹⁹

Armenian sources which mention *Korduk'* provide us with several interesting references to the political history of this region (see below), but as far as the historical geography of Gordyene is concerned, most references are of very general character and as such do not contribute much to our knowledge on the historical geography of Gordyene before the Arab invasion. A few examples are in order.

It appears that the most important observation resulting from the *Epic Histories* is that, like in the Classical sources discussing the third and fourth centuries, *Ałjnik'* and *Korduk'* are two distinctive and neighboring districts. For instance, in appointing spiritual leaders and successors, BP 3.14 St. Daniel appoints a certain Šahita and Epip'an separately for *Korduk'* and *Ałjnik'* (with Great Cop'k') respectively.²²⁰ Separate rulers are also envisaged by BP. 4.50 as those who betrayed his Armenian lord, King Aršak II and went over to the Persian side (in ca. 363 CE²²¹).²²² Above all, separate rulers of *Ałjnik'* and *Korduk'* are mentioned (BP 3.9²²³) in the context of the revolt of prince Bakur against the king of Armenia, Khusro (Khusro III, 330–338 CE²²⁴).

1992, 170–176. See also the monumental publication of Hewsens 2001. For an overview of Armenian references to Gordyene and an evaluation of Hewsens's views, see Marciak 2013a, 149–154.

216 On the root and its different transformations in ancient sources, see a thorough discussion in Nöldeke 1898. See also below.

217 Andreas 1894, 1493; Adontz, Garsoïan 1970, 323. According to Andreas, *Korčayk'* may be derived from **korti-ayk'*, and the palatalization is the result of the following transformation: **kurti-* > **korti-* > **korč*. In turn, Adontz suggests that *Korčayk'* comes from **kortič-ayk'* (like the parallel formations: *atr-pat-ič* or *bayhas-ič-k'*). See Andreas 1894, 1490–1494; Adontz, Garsoïan 1970, 323; Asatrian 2009, 26 and n. 32.

218 Andreas 1894, 1493; M. Hartmann 1897, 96; Hübschmann 1904, 335; Minorsky 1940, 150–151.

219 Likewise Minorsky 1940, 150–151.

220 Garsoïan 1989, 90.

221 Garsoïan 1989, 299, n. 3; Preiser-Kapeller 2001, 40.

222 Garsoïan 1989, 167.

223 Garsoïan 1989, 76–77.

224 Garsoïan 1997, 94.

In turn, in Agat'angelos (the Armenian version), *Korduk'* is mentioned as one of the places along the route of St. Gregory the Illuminator from Syria to Media: "he passed along the borders of Syria, the land of Nor-Širakan and *Korduk'*, to the secure Land of the Medes" (Aa 842).²²⁵ Likewise, in the Arabic version of Agat'angelos (Va 86), *Korduk'*, called here *qmrđl* is said to lie next to the district of Zarawand-Hēr,²²⁶ which could perhaps be located on the far side of the Zagros Mountains on the north-western shore of Lake Urmia.²²⁷

In turn, Moses Khorenats'i (MX 1.14), *Korduk'*, is said to border on the Assyrian plain.²²⁸ Further, MX 2.36 refers to the trip of the sister of King Abgar of Edessa, Awdē through *Korduk'* in winter (where she encountered a heavy snowfall which scattered the whole company and nearly cost them their lives) on the way to Armenia (in the time of King Sanatruq).²²⁹ Finally, in MX 2.74 *Korduk'* is recalled as being on the route of Anak's escape from Armenia to Assyria.²³⁰

The so-called *Geography of Ananias of Širak* (Ašxarhac'oyc', hereinafter: ASX), probably dated to the 7th c. CE,²³¹ speaks of three *Kordik's* (Upper, Middle and Lower) and of *Korduk'*, all of which together, including seven other small districts to the east, constitute one greater territory of *Korčayk'*.²³² In ASX, *Korduk'* is the westernmost of the eleven districts of *Korčayk'*.²³³

Another important toponym in Armenian sources which may be of some relevance for the historical geography of Gordyene is *Tmorik'*, which is identified by Hewsen as the area around the fortress of *T'man* on the slopes of Mt. Sararad/Ararad, is the later Cudi Dağı (and the Turkish Habis Tepesi).²³⁴ In Hewsen's view, Armenian *Tmorik'* matches Strabo's *Tamoritis* (*Tamonitis*)²³⁵ in *Geog.* 11.14.5 (conquered by Artaxias "from the Syrians").²³⁶ Hewsen's location is problematic, because it puts *Tmorik'* on the mountain slopes

225 Hewsen 1988–89, 284; Thomson 1976, 377.

226 Toumanoff 1963, 161; Hewsen 1988–89, 286, the term *qrđtyn* is also mentioned.

227 Hewsen 1988–89, 281.

228 Thomson 1978, 94.

229 Thomson 1978, 177–178; Hewsen 1988–89, 285.

230 Thomson 1978, 220; Hewsen 1988–89, 285.

231 Hewsen 1978–79, 77.

232 Hewsen 1988–89, 281, 283.

233 Hewsen 1988–89, 281, 283.

234 Hewsen 1988–89, 287.

235 H.L. Jones 1928, 324, n. 6; Lasserre 1975, 123.

236 Hewsen 1988–89, 287. This connection was also considered possible by Hübschmann 1904, 213, 258.

overlooking the Upper Tigris valley as marked by the Bohtan River to the west and the Assyrian Khabur River to the east.²³⁷

However, since we can locate the settlement of the Karduchoi in the mountains south of the Bohtan River and north of modern Cizre, it is the Upper Tigris valley east of the Bohtan and west of the Khabur (and not east of the Khabur as Hewsen suggests) which was the most natural stretch of the Tigris valley for the expansion of the Karduchoi. Consequently, the core of the country of Γορδυαῖοι / Γορδυηνοί (= Καρδοῦχοι) where Hewsen puts *Tmorik'*. No non-Armenian source sees *Tmorik'* as a synonym of Gordyene.²³⁸

However, MX 2.53 gives us a precise clue as to the location of *Tmorik'* when he points to Ałki, as the main city of *Tmorik'*.²³⁹ Ałki can most likely be identified as the modern Elki on the east bank of the Khabur, and this means that the ancient *Tmorik'* was a mountainous region in the upper Khabur region,²⁴⁰ and therefore we cannot see *Tmorik'* as corresponding to Gordyene as a whole in any period as Hewsen does.²⁴¹ If *Tmorik'* extended out of Elki further east and not south-west to the Tigris river bed, we could well understand its capture by Tigranes II the Great as an inclusion in the Upper Tigris valley in the general vicinity of Adiabene (Strabo's Syrians in *Geog.* 11.14.5), and see the Armenian expansion into this region as coming from Armenia along the south-eastern border of Lake Van into the Upper Tigris valley.

Generally speaking, Armenian sources confirm the process of geopolitical and administrative distinction, which is also evident in Classical sources referring to the late third and fourth centuries CE. Most importantly, Arzanene and Gordyene were distinct districts. Furthermore, Gordyene (*Korduk'*) appears to be a country located close to the Mesopotamian desert (Assyrian plain in MX 1.14, MX 2.74), Adiabene (Nor-Širakan in Aa 842; MX 1.14; MX 2.74), and located on the route to Media (Aa 842, Va 86) or Armenia if travelling from Mesopotamia (MX 2.26; MX 2.74).

237 Hewsen 1984, 354–355; Hewsen 1988–89, 287.

238 Hewsen 1984, 354–355 and Hewsen 1988–89, 287 suggests *Tamoritis/Tmorik'* as an alternative name for the same district as Strabo's Γορδυηνή and Ammianus' *Corduena*.

239 For a possibility that the name *Tmorik'* in MX 2.53 was directly taken from Strabo, *Geog.* 11.14.5, see Thomson 2006, 192, n. 364.

240 Hübschmann 1904, 258, 337.

241 See Hewsen 1988–89, 289–290.

4.9 Cudi Dağ in Jewish-Postbiblical, Syriac and Arabic Sources

An interesting motif, both in terms of culture and historical geography, appears in ancient literature with regard to Gordyene and Noah's Ark. In the Hebrew Bible and the LXX, Noah's Ark is said to have rested on the mountains of Ararat (Gen 8.4: *על הרי אררט* and LXX Gen 8.4: *ἐπὶ τὰ ὄρη τὰ Ἀραράτ*). However, the location of Noah's Ark was reinterpreted in subsequent traditions.

In retelling the Biblical story about Noah and the flood,²⁴² Josephus (*Ant.* 1.90) tells us that Noah's Ark rested on a certain mountain in Armenia (*περὶ ἁγῶν τινὰ ὄρους σταθείσης κατὰ τὴν Ἀρμενίαν*), but next relates other Hellenistic historians to reinforce the credibility of the Biblical episode. For instance, Berossos the Chaldean is reported by Josephus (*Ant.* 1.93) to claim that there is still some part of Noah's Ark in Armenia, at the mountain of the Gordyaeans (*ἐν τῇ Ἀρμενίᾳ πρὸς τῷ ὄρει τῷ Καρδυάων*).²⁴³ On a different occasion (*Ant.* 20.24–25), Josephus reports that the remains of Noah's Ark are still shown to visitors in the country called *Καρρῶν*, which bares amomum in great plenty. The otherwise unattested *Καρρῶν* can easily be emended as *Καρδῶν*, as somewhere in the Semitic transmission the Aramaic daleth must have been confused with resh (*קרדון* < *קרדון** < *קרדו*)—a very common paleographical phenomenon.²⁴⁴

Biblical Ararat is widely identified as Qardū in Rabbinic and Syriac traditions.²⁴⁵ Both Targum Pseudo-Jonathan and Onqelos (Gen 8.4) locate the ark on the mountains of Qardū (Tg. Ps.-J.: *על טורי קרדו*; Tg. Onq.: *קרדון* [sic] *על טורי*), and Tg. Onq. adds that “the name of one mountain is Qardonia [קרדוניא], and the name of the other mountain is Armenia [ארמניא].”²⁴⁶ Targums Isaiah 37.38 and Jeremiah 51.27 also equate Ararat (*ארץ אררט* and *מלכות ארעא* respectively) with Qardū. Similarly, the Midrash Gen. Rabbah quotes the Biblical verse: “and the ark came to rest ... in the mountains of Ararat”, and immediately adds—“on the mountains of Qardunya” (different spellings: *קרדוניא*, *קורדוניא*, *קרדניא*).²⁴⁷ This identification is also present in the Syriac Peshita, where Noah's Ark does

242 Feldman 1988, 31–57 (esp. 47).

243 See also a different view attributed to Nikolaos Damaskenos and preserved by Josephus in *Ant.* 1.94–95.

244 Bochart 1651, 22; Markwart 1903, 289–291, n. 4; Barish 1983, 69–70; Harrak 2001, 170–171. This emendation is accepted by Debevoise 1938, 165; Kahrstedt 1950, 66; Feldman 1965, 402, n. “b”; Kahle 1959, 270, n. 4.

245 Neusner 1964b, 230–240 (esp. 233); Harrak 2001, 168–189.

246 Clarke 1984, 9; Harrak 2001, 171.

247 Oppenheimer 1983, 374, n. 10.

not rest on the mountains of Ararat, but on the mountains of Qardū. The same phenomenon of replacing Ararat with Qardū can be found in Syriac sources in the story of St. Eugene.²⁴⁸ The story features St. Eugene's pilgrimage through Syria and northern Mesopotamia in the 4th century CE.²⁴⁹ At some point, when St. Eugene was preaching in the villages of Qardū, the narrative recalls a Biblical episode about the assassination of the Assyrian king, Sennacherib, by his sons (2 Kgs 19.36–37; Isa 37.36–38; 2 Chr 32.21–22; Tob 1.21) and adds a previously unknown detail—one of the assassins found refuge in Sargūgā, one of the Qardū villages at the foot of the mountain not too far from the ark. This location does not really fit the Biblical version, where the assassin found refuge in the land of Ararat. It is evident that Syriac traditions no longer know Ararat, and the area once inhabited by the ancient Urartu became Qardū for Syriac sources.²⁵⁰

In Jewish, Syriac and Islamic traditions, the mountain in Qardū on which Noah's Ark was believed to have rested was identified with the Arabic al-Jūdī²⁵¹ (modern Cudi Dağı).²⁵² This identification is attested as early as the 5th century CE (when the East Syrian Katholikos Dadišō' sought refuge on the Cudi Dağı in the monastery devoted to the cult of Noah's Ark) and persisted throughout later centuries in Christian, Muslim and Jewish writers (Eutychius of Alexandria, aṭ-Ṭabarī, Benjamin of Tudela).²⁵³ The remains of an East-Syriac sanctuary devoted to Noah's Ark on the Cudi Dağı were described by G.L. Bell,²⁵⁴ and the early medieval data of these remains, if correct, could reinforce the identification of the Cudi Dağı with late ancient traditions on Mount Qardū.²⁵⁵

All in all, the tradition locating Noah's Ark on the Cudi Dağı above modern Cizre goes back to ancient times, at least to the 5th century CE. Therefore, it appears to be old enough to allow a connection between Mount Qardū and

248 Harrak 2001, 169–175.

249 Harrak 2001, 168–189.

250 Harrak 2001, 170, 173.

251 It seems that there are two options (see Harrak 2001, 171–172)—either the Quranic name al-Jūdī (*sūrat al-hūd* 11, 44), once denoting a mountain in Arabia, was simply applied to Mount Qardū at the beginning of the Arabic conquest on the account of the similar sound, or the Quranic story is dependent on the Biblical story in its Syriac version and consequently al-Jūdī itself is a misrepresentation of Qardū or Qardī (so Obermeyer 1929, 132; Harrak 2001, 172).

252 Syme 1995, 35; Harrak 2001, 175–176.

253 See Harrak 2001, 175–176.

254 Bell 1911, 289–294.

255 Syme 1995, 35; Harrak 2001, 176.

the Cudi Dağl.²⁵⁶ This in turn almost gives us a fixed point for the location of Josephus' Καρρῶν, and consequently allows us to precisely locate Adiabene's 1st century CE expansion into Gordyene as reaching as far as Cizre.²⁵⁷

4.10 Summary and Conclusions

In summary, ancient Gordyene originated as the country of the Karduchoi who lived in the *mountainous* region north of modern Cizre and south of the Bohtan River. From the geographical point of view, the Gordyaeen Mountains were frequently considered to be part of the Armenian Tauros.

After Xenophon's time (401 BCE), the Karduchoi expanded into the upper Tigris valley. It appears that the western border of Gordyene's presence in the Tigris valley fell on the Bohtan River for most of its ancient history. However, it is attested that the kingdom of Gordyene expanded over the Bohtan River into the territory later known as that of Arzanene (before 95 BCE). But in the late third and fourth centuries CE at the latest Arzanene and Gordyene were again separate districts. The eastern border of Gordyene in the East is not explicitly attested in ancient sources; it may, however, be tentatively put on the Khabur River as the first major natural barrier in this area.²⁵⁸ The eastern frontier of Gordyene could be very susceptible to changing political constellations, as it was precisely this area where Gordyene bordered on its mighty neighbor Adiabene.

It is likely that in the north Gordyene also expanded north of the Bohtan River. In the sources from the late third and fourth centuries CE one can see traces of this expansion of *Corduena* over the Bohtan into *Moxoena* (and perhaps *Rehimena*). In the other direction, although Gordyene, as one of the *Transtigritanae regiones*, was essentially located on the east (north) bank of the Tigris, its interaction with nomadic tribes of Mesopotamia is well attested in sources, and could also lead to at least a slight migration of its population over the Tigris.²⁵⁹ Hence, Gordyene's connections with Mt. Masion and the Arab tribes of Mesopotamia in ancient sources.

²⁵⁶ I owe this idea to Prof. J. Reade.

²⁵⁷ See Marciak 2014a, 198.

²⁵⁸ This is the eastern border of Gordyene according to M. Hartmann 1897, 91; Nöldeke 1898, 73; Honigmann 1936, 1014.

²⁵⁹ Likewise Dillemann 1962, 110 and Kahrstedt 1950, 59–60, though the latter on different grounds—he is clearly influenced by Eratosthenes' and Strabo's traditions locating Mt. Masion near Nisibis and Gordyene itself in Mesopotamia.

Gordyene owed its political importance to its strategic location. Namely, it straddled important communication routes, including mountain passes to Armenia and the routes alongside the Tigris to Adiabene. Accordingly, its most important cities were located on the Tigris, and their primary task was to guard river crossings and outlets of mountain passes.

Cultural Landscape of Gordyene¹

5.1 Literary Sources

5.1.1 *Xenophon*

Xenophon's *Anabasis* is the first ancient text which gives us insight into the cultural landscape of Gordyene (as the land of the Karduchoi). In the context of the march of the army of the "Ten Thousand" from Mesopotamia to the Black Sea, Xenophon makes a few interesting observations about the people Karduchoi, as the Greeks passed through their land.

First, as far as the identity of this people is concerned, Xenophon presents the Karduchoi as a mountain people not really under control of Persian kings and living in a kind of semi-autonomous area between the satrapy of Armenia and the satrapy of Assyria, with the satrap of which the Karduchoi are, however, reported to have had some kind of mutual agreement (*Anab.* 3.5.16). Thus, from the administrative point of view, the Karduchoi tended more towards the satrapy of Assyria than the satrapy of Armenia. It should be strongly stressed that in Xenophon's narrative Armenia and the land of the Karduchoi were clearly divided by the river Kentrites, the name of which is very telling (meaning a *divider* in Armenian), as it appears to express the role of the river as not only a territorial but also a cultural border between Armenian and non-Armenian lands.² Besides this, we do not learn from Xenophon anything more about the Karduchoi's cultural or ethnic affiliation. No specific details are given about their language; we only learn that the Greeks had to resort to interpreters to communicate with the captured Karduchoi to get any intelligence (*Anab.* 4.2.18).

The land of the Karduchoi in Xenophon's *Anabasis* 4.1.1–4.3.2 is sometimes perceived as a harsh and inhospitable environment.³ Indeed, the land of the Karduchoi (ἡ χώρα τῶν Καρδούχων) is described by Xenophon as a mountainous region (τὰ Καρδούχεια ὄρη). At the same time, to be more precise, the picture was much more complex. The Karduchoi lived in villages (κώμαι) situated in small valleys between the mountains and in nooks in the mountains (ἐν τοῖς

1 This chapter is a slightly revised and expanded version of Marciak 2016b.

2 A. Sagona, C. Sagona 2004, 52.

3 See Syme 1995, 54. Perhaps the autumn weather conditions the Greeks encountered in the land of the Karduchoi contributed to this impression.

ἀγχεσί τε καὶ μυχοῖς τῶν ὀρέων), and they moved up into the mountains (ἐπὶ τὰ ὄρη) only to find refuge (*Anab.* 4.1.7–8, see Figure 34).⁴ In this sense, in addition to animal husbandry (typical for a mountainous environment) and crafts (the bows, see below), the Karduchoi could also cultivate agriculture.⁵ Taking a closer look at Xenophon's descriptions, we discover that Karduchian villages were rich in food supplies (*Anab.* 4.1.8 and 4.2.22). What is more, the Karduchoi also cultivated wine, sometime in large quantities (*Anab.* 4.2.22). The use of plastered cisterns for wine storage in private areas especially suggests a great deal of local prosperity.⁶

Another interesting detail that comes to the fore in Xenophon's text is the reputation of the Karduchoi as a war-like mountain people. The Karduchoi were lightly armed, and consequently did not dare to face the Greeks in hand-to-hand combat.⁷ They instead evacuated their settlements and conducted guerrilla warfare by attacking the Greeks with arrows, stones and blocked defiles.⁸ This tactic made a perfect use of the natural conditions of the local terrain.⁹ The folds of the mountains were precipitous wooded and cut only by narrow gorges and streamlets. This meant that only narrow paths and canyons were accessible to the Greeks.¹⁰ Consequently, blocking such passages and occupying higher ground along the path by the Karduchoi was a major obstacle to the Greeks (see Figure 35).¹¹ In addition to the simple but successful tactic of rolling boulders at the Greeks,¹² the Karduchoi made their mark as skilled bowmen—their bows were so powerful that they could penetrate the Greek

4 Marciak 2012b, 179.

5 Wiesehöfer 2012; Marciak 2012b, 179, n. 45.

6 According to Lendle 1995, 205 in Greece plastered cisterns were used mainly in taverns (see Aristophanes, *Ekkl.* 154). See Syme 1995, 54, who contrasts Strabo's descriptions of Gordyene's prosperity (*Geog.* 16.1.24) with the mountainous environment of the land of the Karduchoi.

7 Waterfield 2006, 138; J.W.I. Lee 2007, 106.

8 J.W.I. Lee 2007, 34, 106.

9 On the topography of this region, see Shiel 1838, 80–82; Pollington 1840, 449–450; Naval Intelligence Division 1942–1943, 174–176; J.W.I. Lee 2007, 28–35.

10 Naval Intelligence Division 1942–1943, 174; J.W.I. Lee 2007, 28.

11 This tactic has a very high reputation in modern scholarship: Waterfield 2006, 129: “places so wild that an entire Persian army could vanish without trace, as was rumored to have happened in the Karduchian mountains”; J.W.I. Lee 2007: 26: “nobody got out of this mountainous land alive”. What is more, it has been rightly pointed out by S. Brennan 2012, 321 that the use of this tactic continues until modern days among Kurdish fighters, and still proves to be very successful.

12 Lendle 1995, 201; Waterfield 2006, 134.

armor.¹³ The efficiency of their bows clearly resulted from their size. They were much longer than Greek bows (3 cubits for a bow and 2 cubits for an arrow); in fact, they were so long that the Greeks, having captured them and recycled them as javelins.¹⁴ Although Xenophon does not describe the bows in more detail, their size and other Oriental parallels¹⁵ suggest that they were a kind of longbow which would be used by placing the lower part on the ground: one had to set a foot against the bow and shoot by first drawing the bowstring back, then releasing it.¹⁶

5.1.2 *Strabo*

Another very important witness to Gordyene's culture is Strabo's *Geographika*. We can find many brief references to this country in Strabo's *magnum opus*, (*Geog.* 2.1.26; 11.12.4; 11.14.2; 11.14.8; 16.1.1; 16.1.8; 16.1.21; 16.2.5), but one passage, *Geog.* 16.1.24–25 is by far the most extensive treatment of Gordyene in ancient literature.¹⁷

Near the Tigris (πρὸς δὲ τῷ Τίγρει) lie the places belonging to the Gordyaeans (τὰ τῶν Γορδυαίων χωρία), whom the ancients called Karduchoi (Καρδοῦχοι); and their cities are named Sareisa and Satalka and Pinaka, a very powerful fortress, with three citadels, each enclosed by a separate fortification of its own, so that they constitute, as it were, a triple city. But still it not only was held in subjection by the king of the Armenians, but the Romans took it by force, although the Gordyaeans (οἱ Γορδυαῖοι) had an exceptional reputé as master-builders and as experts in the construction of siege engines; and it was for this reason that Tigranes used them in such work. But also the rest of Mesopotamia became subject to the Romans. Pompey assigned to Tigranes most of the places in this country, I mean all that are worth mentioning; for the country is rich in pasturage, and so rich in plants that it also produces the evergreens and a spice-plant called amomum; and it is a feeding-ground for lions; and it

13 Lendle 1995, 197, 205–206; Olbrycht 2004, 82–83; Waterfield 2006, 132.

14 Lendle 1995, 197, 205–206; Olbrycht 2004, 82–83; Waterfield 2006, 132.

15 See Diod. 3.8.4 and Arrian, *Ind.* 16.6. A similar bow (however, dated to as late as the first to third centuries CE) was found in Baghouz/Yrzi (some 40 km southeast of Dura-Europos), its length was 1.47 m. See Olbrycht 2004, 82–83; Waterfield 2006, 132.

16 Marciak 2012b, 180–181 n. 58.

17 Strabo's text quoted here is that of H.L. Jones 1930, 230–233 (with own modification of some proper names). The editions of Radt 2005 (and 2009) and Lasserre 1975 were also consulted.

also produces naphtha and the stone called gangitis, which is avoided by reptiles. Gordys, the son of Triptolemos, is said to have taken up his abode in Gordyene (Γορδυηνή), and later also the Eretrians, who were carried off by the Persians. Of Triptolemos, however, I shall soon give a clear account in my description of the Syrians.

Many interesting details come to the fore in Strabo's *Geog.* 16.1.24–25. First of all, Strabo (like Pliny the Elder *HN* 6.44) makes an explicit connection between the Karduchoi (Καρδοῦχοι) and the Gordyaeans (Γορδυαῖοι). According to Strabo, the Gordyaeans are direct descendants of the Karduchoi, and the only difference lies in the fact that the mountain people known to Xenophon were called by a more ancient name. Furthermore, it appears that in *Geog.* 16.1.24–25 Strabo conveys to us an implicit difference between the Gordyaeans and the Armenians (and the Romans): the Gordyaeans, though independent and war-like, were subdued first by Tigranes II the Great and then by the Romans.

According to Strabo *Geog.* 16.1.24–25, the Gordyaeans possessed some extraordinary military skills as master-builders (ἀρχιτεκτονικοί) and engineers skilled in the construction of siege engines (πολιορκητικῶν ὀργάνων ἔμπειροι). Given Xenophon's descriptions, this military ability appears to be a new skill for the Gordyaeans. However, this is in perfect agreement with the fact that Strabo's Gordyene is not only a rural area, but the process of apparently Hellenistic urbanization had its effect also on Gordyene. Namely, we hear of three cities located near the Tigris (πρὸς δὲ τῷ Τίγρει): Sareisa, Satalka, and Pinaka. Of the three, only Pinaka can now be identified (see below).¹⁸ The Gordyaeans made their mark on Pinaka as master builders and military engineers: Pinaka was so heavily fortified that its three powerful citadels made the impression of a triple city to Strabo (on Gordyene's cities, see also below).

Above all, Strabo's Gordyene is rich in natural resources: pasturage (εὐβοτος), plants (εὐερνής¹⁹) including evergreen plants (ἀειθαλής), as well as resources of hydrocarbon—naphtha (νάφθα) and *gangitis* (γαγγίτις). What is more, Strabo mentions *amomum* (ἄμωμον), which he characterizes as ἄρωμα, and adds that Gordyene's landscape provided a good habitat for lions.

18 Strabo's location may mean both the Tigris and one of its main tributaries in the region—the Bohtan or Bitlis rivers. All identifications of Sareisa and Satalka are based on the *alleged* similarity of ancient names with modern toponyms (which in fact do not appear to be very close) and are not attested archaeologically in any way. See chapter 4.2.

19 LSJ 712.

The terms used by Strabo to describe Gordyene's natural wealth are very telling. For instance, the term εὐβοτος ("abounding in pasture"²⁰) was also used in Homer's *Odyssey* to describe the pastures of a mysterious land of Syria (not Syria in the Near East, but an island in the Aegean Sea) that appeared to be "a miniparadise where famine and disease are unknown."²¹ In turn, Strabo's evergreens (ἀειθαλής) were drought-resistant plants that never lost their leaves in the four seasons. Ancient landscape indicated by this term could range from savannah to woodland.²² Given the approximate location of Gordyene as revealed through our historical sources, it appears that the most probable location of Strabo's pastures and evergreens was the Tigris floodplain, whose natural conditions provided water year-round for plant nutrition in its nearest vicinity, especially reed, grass, and small trees.²³ In this context, we can also understand how this environment provided a good habitat for lions (see also Amm. Marc. 18.7.5).²⁴ At the same time, the Upper Tigris area also features *maquis*,²⁵ that is, evergreen underbrush (various types of shrubs and small trees). Maquis frequently occurs on lower slopes of the mountainous area, many types of shrubs of the maquis are known to be aromatic (like mints, laurels, or myrtles).²⁶ In this context belongs amomum, which is also referred to in other ancient sources as the most characteristic product of Gordyene (Philargyrius apud Sallustius, *Hist.* 4.72; Josephus, *Ant.* 20.25; and likely Dioskourides 1.15 under Armenia).²⁷ Amomum was a spice plant (from the ginger family), akin to cardamom. It enjoyed its greatest popularity in Rome in the first centuries BCE and CE when it was particularly used as an incense, a flavor (especially for wine), and in medicine (in analgesic and anti-inflammatory treatment).²⁸

Furthermore, Gordyene is also famous for its hydrocarbon resources. Strabo's naphtha (νάφθα) is (as we can judge from his other descriptions in

20 LSJ 707.

21 Hansen 2004, 170.

22 Bintliff 2012, 19.

23 For an analogy to the Orontes basin, see Aruz – Graff – Rakic 2013, 122.

24 Biffi 2002, 167 alludes to the temple of 'Anaitis in Elimea where lions were bred. However, Biffi's analogy is a little misleading, since Strabo's (and Ammianus') description rather points to the fact that Tigris' savannah-like environment was a natural habitat for lions. This understanding is also indicated by the Greek λεοντοβότος which translates as "fed on by lions." See LSJ 1037–1038.

25 Jankowska 1991, 231.

26 Encyclopaedia Britannica online: <<http://www.britannica.com/science/maquis-vegetation>> access 04.14.2016.

27 Wagler 1894, 1873–1874; Barish 1983, 70 and nn. 114–115 on p. 96; Hünemörder 2014.

28 Dalby 2000, 102–106; Gaertner 2005, 497; Toutain 1996, 105; Biffi 2002, 167.

Geog., see 16.1.15) a kind of liquid bitumen.²⁹ In turn, the name of the stone γαγγίτης is otherwise unattested, and it is likely to be emended into either ἐγγαγίδα (Nikander, *Theriaca* 37) or Γαγάτην (Isidor, *Origenes* 16.4.3); the latter emendation would especially give us an otherwise well-attested name of a precious stone, Γαγάτης (see e.g. Pliny the Elder *HN* 36.141–142).³⁰ *Gagates* was used in ancient times for various purposes including medicine (for epilepsy, dentalgia, scrofula); it appears that Strabo's statement that this stone was avoided by reptiles should be understood (more correctly) in light of other ancient references: it was actually the smoke produced by burning gagates, which scared away reptiles.³¹

It appears that both Xenophon and Strabo agree in general on two characteristics of Gordyene: first, it was a resourceful and prosperous country; secondly, its people had some exceptional war abilities. Remarkably, both characteristics are also confirmed by later sources. In Plutarch's *Luc.* 29–30, we read that Lucullus' soldiers found an abundance of supplies during their winter camp in Gordyene; it was actually the life of comfort in Gordyene (compared to the discipline of Roman camp-life) that can be partly blamed for the loss of discipline among Lucullus' soldiers.³² Next, Josephus, in writing about Izates II's stay in Gordyene in the first half of the first century CE (*Ant.* 20.24–25), emphasized the good quality of its soil, especially for the production of amomum.³³ Likewise, Ammianus briefly characterized Gordyene as a rich region in the fourth century CE (*uber regio* in *Amm. Marc.* 25.7.8).³⁴ Furthermore, the Talmudic traditions (BT *Pesahim* 7a.21b) speak of the wheat of Qardū (חִטֵּי קוֹרְדִּינְתָא) which functions in Talmudic expressions as a synonym of prosperity (betrothal on the eve of Pesach is not valid *even* with the wheat of Qardū).³⁵ Concerning military excellence, Ammianus recalls *Zabdiceni sagittarii* in *Amm. Marc.* 20.7.1, that is, mounted archers from Zabdicena. Although the relation between Gordyene (Corduene) and Zabdicena is not entirely

29 Partington 1960, 3; Hammond 2007, 69; Toutain 1996, 124.

30 Radt 2009, 280; Biffi 2002, 167; Marciak 2012b, 91, n. 125.

31 Biffi 2002, 167 (with other references to ancient sources).

32 Eckhardt 1910b, 201.

33 This geographical interpretation rests on the emendation of an otherwise unknown Καρρών to Καρδών in *Ant.* xx 24. For this emendation, see chapter 4.9.

34 What is more, *Amm. Marc.* 25.7.9 speaks of fifteen fortresses to be handed over to Persia ("Arzanena, Moxoena, Zabdicena, Rehimena and Corduena with fifteen fortresses"), but it is not entirely clear whether these fortresses were located only in Corduena or in all five provinces. Either way, Gordyene in *Amm. Marc.* 25.7.9 again belongs to an urbanized area. See chapter 4.7.

35 Oppenheimer 1983, 374–375.

clear (perhaps Zabdicena originated as a region within the confines of the old kingdom of Gordyene, see above), and the skill of excellent archery was widespread in the region (and from the Roman perspective, appeared to be a typically Iranian feature), one is tempted to see this skill of the *Zabdiceni* as a continuation of the Karduchian excellence as bowmen.

There is yet another interesting episode in cultural terms in *Geog.* 16.1.24–25. Strabo writes that Gordys, son of Triptolemos took up his abode in Gordyene. Strabo's remark on Gordys in fact comes from a larger literary tradition about the Argonautic expedition, wherein Jason and his companion went to Kolchis to retrieve the Golden Fleece. Of Jason's companions, many settled in these lands: Armenos in Armenia, Arbelos in Arbela, and Gordys in Gordyene. These stories are known among scholars as *Siedlungsgeschichten*,³⁶ that is, ancient founding myths that aim to explain the origin of an ethnos (and frequently its character) in connection to its famous (mythic) ancestor (eponym). In this case, the eponym is a Greek, and this fact suggests some affinity of a given ethnos to the Hellas. Of course, these traditions are not considered by scholars to be sound as records of historical events.³⁷ Nevertheless, the very existence of these legends is significant in itself. That is to say, stories conveying *interpretatio graeca* are supposed to be formulated by the Greeks in the first place,³⁸ and consequently their existence implies the Greeks' knowledge or contact with these countries. However, if the stories should be understood as inventions of local elites, it still reveals a lot about their attitude. Namely, it suggests some deal of Hellenization of local elites who had a taste for such stories. Furthermore, it is not very likely that such stories would have been made up without, so to speak, anything on the ground which would give some credibility to these stories in the Greeks' eyes. In this case, it appears that the name of Gordys' father is very telling. There are various mythological traditions concerning Triptolemos, but apparently the most prominent one is about Triptolemos as the founder of agriculture. His popularity was particularly high in countries specialized in grain production such as Sicily.³⁹ In this context, Strabo's allusion to Triptolemos again emphasizes the image of Gordyene as a country of fabulous agricultural wealth.⁴⁰

36 Kahrstedt 1950, 59, n. 7. For Greek *Siedlungsgeschichten*, see Markwart 1928, 213–215; Dillemann 1962, 118; Syme 1995, 29.

37 Dillemann 1962, 118.

38 Tcherikover 1961, 24; Hengel 1973, 23–27, 464–486; Hengel 1976, 73–93.

39 Bremmer 2002.

40 Notice that the use of Triptolemos' images on bronze medallions of Antoninus Pius and Faustina is perceived by scholars as a proclamation of the Golden Age. See Bremmer 2002.

Strabo also reports in *Geog.* 16.1.25 that Gordys was followed by the Eretrians who settled in Gordyene. At first glance, this story may look similar to the *Siedlungslegende* of Gordys; all the more so, as the deportation of the Eretrians developed into a literary *topos* in later literature (see, e.g., *Vita Apol.* 1.23–24).⁴¹ At the same time, this episode is also related by Herodotus (*Herod.* 6.101–119), and finds good parallels in the policy of the Achaemenids.⁴² Therefore, one may think that the story does contain a historical kernel of truth and some Greek settlements existed in this area.⁴³ All in all, Strabo's remarks on Gordys and the Eretrians indicate that Gordyene's cultural landscape included some Greek elements.

5.1.3 *Armenian and Syriac Ecclesiastical Sources*

In referring to events in (Greater) Armenia in the fourth century CE, Armenian sources, most of which were composed between the fifth and ninth centuries CE, perceive Gordyene as an integral part of the Armenian world. This is particularly evident on two levels, political and religious. In the first case, local rulers of Gordyene are presented as members of the Armenian nobility under suzerainty of the Armenian king (for this aspect, see below chapter 6.5.). In the second case, Armenian sources show the spread of Christianity in Gordyene as the result of the mission of the Armenian future national patrons, St. Gregory the Illuminator and his successors (St. Epip'an and Šalita, the disciples of St. Daniel, successor to St. Gregory the Illuminator).

Let us give a few examples. In describing the provincial organization of the Armenian kingdom under King Vałaršak' (presented as the first ever Arsacid king of Armenia and brother of the eponymous king of Parthia, Aršak⁴⁴), Moses Khorenats'i mentions Korduk' as one of many districts which together make up the original territory under power of the Arsacid-Armenian crown (*MX* 2.8).⁴⁵ In turn, the *Epic Histories* mention Ĵon, prince of Korduk' as one of the most faithful servants of the king of Armenia because he led the forces of other Armenian princes in the fight against the pro-Persian revolt of Bakur, *bdeašx* of Aljnik' (*BP* 3.9).⁴⁶ The *Epic Histories* also recall an anonymous lord of the district of Korduk' who, alongside many other Armenian princes, went

41 Penella 1974, 295–300.

42 Briant 2002, 505–506.

43 Biffi 2002, 168.

44 Russell 1987, 116.

45 Thomson 1978, 140–141.

46 Garsoïan 1989, 77.

over to Shapur II, the king of Persia (and so, in the eyes of the Armenian tradition, betrayed the Armenian king, Aršak II, see *BP* 4.50 and *BP* 5.10).⁴⁷

Perhaps most significant references to the prince of Korduk', which connect both the religious and political dimensions, can be found in Agat'angelos. First, *Korduk'* is mentioned as one of the places along the route of St. Gregory the Illuminator, traditionally seen as the founding father of the Armenian church, from Syria to Media: "he passed along the borders of Syria, the land of Nor-Širakan and *Korduk'*, to the secure Land of the Medes" (*Aa* 842).⁴⁸ More importantly, Agat'angelos (*Aa* 795) writes of an anonymous prince of the land of Korduk' who, together with other Armenian princes, sat in the counsel of King Trdat (Tiridates IV) and took part in the ordination of St. Gregory the Illuminator.⁴⁹ The prince of the land of Korduk' is titled as the-Warden-of-the-March of the region of Asorestan, which would suggest his role as one of the Armenian *vitaxata*, that is, as one of the Armenian rulers in charge of "the Armenian border province" defending Armenia against a foreign invasion from Northern Mesopotamia.⁵⁰

According to *BP* 3.14 and 5. 25–27, Ałjnik' and Korduk' also became the scenes of the mission of St. Epip'an and Šalita, disciples of St. Daniel, successor to St. Gregory the Illuminator as the patriarch of (Greater) Armenia.⁵¹

As far as the political level is concerned, it should suffice to notice here (for more details, see chapter 6.5.), that the picture of Gordyene as an Armenian country does not conform well to the testimony of other contemporary non-Armenian sources. With regard to the religious dimension, we do possess some data coming from non-Armenian sources that show the background of early Christian traditions in this area.

Namely, the Biblical tradition about the landing site of Noah was reinterpreted in Rabbinic and Syriac-Christian sources: the site of the landing was located in the mountains in Qardū and not in the mountains of Ararat (see chapter 4.9.). Furthermore, at least beginning in the fifth century CE, the sanctuary where the alleged remains of the arch were venerated and which was well known across Syriac-Christian, Jewish, and Islamic traditions, was located on the modern Cudi Dağı (Arabic al-Jūdī).⁵² This reinterpretation suggests

47 Garsoïan 1989, 167 and 200.

48 Hewsen 1988–89, 284; Thomson 1976, 377.

49 Thomson 1976, 335.

50 See Hewsen 1988–89, 284; Garsoïan 1989, 475.

51 Garsoïan 1992, 55.

52 Syme 1995, 35; Harrak 2001, 175–176. This location is also known to the Armenian traditions (*BP* 3.10), but this theme is not prominent in Armenian writings. See Garsoïan 1992, 62, n. 102.

close ties between Cudi Dağ and Syriac writers. Perhaps one may speculate that Syriac writers or their sources lived close to the area of Cudi Dağ.

What is more, when it comes to the ecclesiastical administration in this area, we have at our disposal numerous acts of ecclesiastical councils that show us the affiliation of bishoprics in the Upper Tigris region. In this context, the diocese of Beth Qardū, together with the dioceses of Beth Arzun, Beth Zabdai, Beth Raḥimai, and Beth Moksāyē, belonged to the Nestorian metropolitan province of Nisibis (Beth 'Arbāyē).⁵³

The diocese of Beth Qardū is mentioned in several acts of ecclesiastical councils:⁵⁴ in Seleucia-Ctesiphon in 410 CE (Miles),⁵⁵ the synod of Dadīšō' in 424 CE (Miles),⁵⁶ the synod of Mar Aba I in 544 CE (Barsauma),⁵⁷ and the synod of Gregory I in 605 CE (Marutha).⁵⁸ What is more, Barsauma, bishop of Qardū, is mentioned as a member of the Nestorian embassy sent by Persian King Khusro I to Emperor Justinian I in 563 CE.⁵⁹ In turn, the bishop of Beth Arzun⁶⁰ is mentioned in the acts of the council of Seleucia-Ctesiphon in 410 CE (Daniel),⁶¹ the synod of Dadīšō' in 424 CE (again Daniel),⁶² the synod of Bāwai in 497 CE (Job).⁶³ In the case of Beth Zabdai, its local bishop is probably alluded to by Ammianus Marc. for 359 CE,⁶⁴ but the diocese of Beth Zabdai (Yōhannān) is officially attested in 497 CE at the synod of Bāwai.⁶⁵ In turn, the diocese of Beth Raḥimai is first attested in the acts of the Seleucia-Ctesiphon council in 410 CE (Abraham),⁶⁶ likewise Beth Moksāyē (Daniel),⁶⁷ which is additionally mentioned at the synod of Dadīšō' in 424 CE (Atticus).⁶⁸ Interestingly,

53 For the ecclesiastical profile of the territories in question, see Fiey 1977, 161–265; Morony 1982, 6–10 including the late-Sasanian and early-Islamic secular administration); Garsoïan 1992, 39–80; Walker 2006, 100–102.

54 Fiey 1977, 175.

55 Chabot 1902, 272, 274, 285. See Garsoïan 1992, 54–55 and n. 66.

56 Chabot 1902, 285.

57 Chabot 1902, 366.

58 Chabot 1902, 478.

59 Chron. Siirt 2.95, Fiey 1977, 175.

60 The ecclesiastical acts also mention bishops of *Ostan Arzun* in 410 CE (Samuel), 424 CE (Yōhannān), 554 CE (Natum). The relation between Arzun and Ostan Arzun is not clear at all. See Hübschmann 1904, 251; Fiey 1977, 191–192; Morony 1982, 9; Garsoïan 1992, 57.

61 Chabot 1902, 272, 274, 285, 617, 619, 620.

62 Chabot 1902, 285.

63 Chabot 1902, 311.

64 Fiey 1977, 163–164.

65 Chabot 1902, 310–311, 315–317.

66 Chabot 1902, 272, 617, 629.

67 Chabot 1902, 272, 616, 617–619.

68 Chabot 1902, 285.

the bishop of Beth Moksāyē is also mentioned among the Armenian bishops who signed the acts of the council of Manazkert in 726 CE reasserting the Monophysite position and independence of the church of (Greater) Armenia.⁶⁹

The available data has evoked slightly different reactions from its two most eminent modern interpreters. J.M. Fiey paid more attention to the presence of non-Armenian element,⁷⁰ while N. Garsoïan accentuated the Armenian strata of the evidence.⁷¹ However, it should be stressed that, at face value, the ecclesiastical affiliation of the diocese of Beth Qardū and other neighboring dioceses (except Beth Moksāyē), suggests close theological and religious ties with Nisibis, an important theological center of Syriac Christianity. What is known as the school of Nisibis (founded in the late fifth century CE after the imperial shutdown of the “School of the Persians” at Edessa) was in fact a powerful East Syriac educational network that “trained hundreds of future bishops, deacons, and monks during the late Sasanian period.”⁷²

Several examples of personal connections between Nisibis and the areas of Beth Qardū and Arzun can be quoted to illustrate close ties between the three dioceses. The following metropolitans of Nisibis had a close contact with Qardū: Barsauma (late fifth century CE) originated from Qardū where he lived as a slave; Nerseh (late fifth century CE) found refuge in Qardū from the persecution of Barsauma’s wife, Mamai; in turn, Shabhīrshō’ is reported to have spent nine years in Qardū before joining the school of Nisibis (in 596 CE).⁷³ In turn, the records of the following metropolitans of Nisibis show connections between Nisibis and Arzun: Ma’na was the teacher of the future metropolitan

69 Chabot 1902, 497.

70 Fiey 1977, 161: « les cinq territoires de la marche d’Arabie ... bien qu’arménisés, contenaient une population non-arménienne, plus important vers le sud, moins important vers le nord (surtout en Moxoène) ».

71 Garsoïan 1992, 42–43. However, it should be noted that the parallels quoted by Garsoïan 1992, 42, n. 15 (where she refers to Garsoïan 1988, 256–257, nn. 24, 30, 34; 272–273, nn. 96–98), which point to the ecclesiastical councils and administrative geography of the region of Sophene at large, do not take into account the difference between the *Transtigritanae regiones* caused by the Roman-Persian treaty from 363 CE. Gordyene was ceded back to Persia and would never again return to Rome (to which it actually belonged only between 298 and 359 CE), only Arzanene was regained in the late 6th century CE (and consequently appears under the province of the Other *Armenia Quarta* or Mesopotamia in *Descriptio Orbis Romani*). All ecclesiastical parallels suggested by Garsoïan 1992, 42, n. 15 (Garsoïan 1988, 256–257, nn. 24, 30, 34; 272–273, nn. 96–98) do not mention bishops of Qardū and his neighboring counterparts (including Arzanene).

72 Walker 2006, 101.

73 Fiey 1977, 176; Garsoïan 1992, 67.

in Nisibis Mar Aba I (540–551 CE), before he himself became the bishop of Arzun; likewise, Išō'yahb I (ca. 579 CE) and Isaac (ca. 646 CE) were first the bishops of Arzun, and next the metropolitans of Nisibis.⁷⁴

In this context, it is important to stress that the highlands north of Nisibis became the heartland of the East-Syriac monastic movement from the fourth and fifth centuries CE. By the end of the Sasanian period, dozens of monasteries, convents, and hermitages dotted the landscape of the Tūr 'Abdīn (also known as Mazi or Izla Mountains).⁷⁵ Though most extant monuments are located in the Tūr 'Abdīn region,⁷⁶ the phenomenon of Christian monasteries spread over the region and embraced neighboring areas, including the area of the Qardū Mountains (in Gordyene), the Sasun Mountains (in Arzanene) and the Great Zab River basin (see Figure 36). For instance, Barsauma (late fifth century CE), the metropolitan of Nisibis, and Ukāmā, the bishop of Arzun (fifth century CE), are reported to have retired into the mountains of Qardū to live the eremitic life.⁷⁷ Ruins of monastic buildings are known from several locations east of the Tigris: from the vicinity of Eski Finik (e.g. Finik, Upper Dera, Lower Dera⁷⁸), and especially from the southern slopes of the Cudi Dağı (Hesana, Kamul, Harbol, and Tamanun⁷⁹).

To sum up, although the Armenian sources tend to see the *Transtigritanae regiones* as Armenian countries, this tendency is by far less documented for the areas that became part of Persia in 363 CE than for the *gentes* that became part of the Byzantine province of the *Armenia Quarta* in the sixth century CE. What is more, the references to bishoprics east of the Batman River found in ecclesiastical councils reveal that dioceses of Beth Qardū, Beth Arzun, Beth Zabdai, and Beth Raḥimai were well-integrated parts of the Syriac-Nestorian Christianity. After all, it may be correct to side with J.M. Fiey's view that the Armenian influence may have been stronger in the north (which is indeed suggested by the appearance of the bishop of Moksāyē at the Armenian council of Manazkert in 726 CE⁸⁰) than in the south (see that a probably more southern

74 Fiey 1977, 187–188; Garsoïan 1992, 67.

75 Walker 2006, 101.

76 See Hollerweger 1999, 56–57.

77 See Garsoïan 1992, 67.

78 Sinclair 1989, 333–334.

79 Sinclair 1989, 335–337.

80 One may however wonder if the monophysite position of Gabriel, bishop of Arzun, which contrasted with the position held by most of Gabriel's predecessors did not contribute to his 'new' Armenian affiliation of his diocese.

Rehimene is not even known to Armenian sources) where the countries tended more towards Mesopotamian-Syrian culture than towards Greater Armenia.

5.1.4 *Geography and Culture*

E. Wheeler has made an interesting suggestion: the geographical location of a given country may speak volumes about its cultural affiliation.⁸¹ In this light, it may be revealing to again take a look at the location of Gordyene from the perspective of transregional connections.

In Xenophon's description (*Anab.* 3.5.15, 4.1.1–4.3.2), the land of the Karduchoi appears to be a political and cultural enclave. The Karduchoi lived in hardly accessible mountains and their land was clearly separated from both Armenia (by the Kentrites River) and the Mesopotamian plain.

In geographical and ethnographical accounts (Strabo, Pliny the Elder, Ptolemy), two specific characteristics of Gordyene come to the fore. First, the sources refer to the mountains in Gordyene and connect them with the Armenian Mountains. Namely, Strabo (*Geog.* 2.1.26) locates the Gordyaeen Mountains (τὰ τῶν Γορδυαίων ὄρη) behind the Armenian gates. Strabo (*Geog.* 11.12.4) says that Tauros proper can also be called the Gordyaeen Mountains (with Masion) which account for the divider between Mesopotamia and Armenia. Ptolemy, *Geogr.* 5.12.2 classifies the Gordyaeen Mountains as one of the ranges belonging to the Armenian massif. Second, Strabo's Gordyene is no longer limited only to the mountainous region south of Lake Van (like in Xenophon), but also includes the open Tigris valley and is consequently exposed to contact with nomadic tribes of the Upper Mesopotamia (*Geog.* 16.1.1 and 16.1.8; Pliny the Elder *HN* 6.43–44, 6.129) and with Adiabene (*Geog.* 16.1.1 and 16.1.8; Pliny the Elder, *HN* 6.43–44, 6.129).

Although in referring to the conquests of Tigranes II the Great, both Strabo (*Geog.* 16.1.24) and Plutarch (Plutarch, *Luc.* 21–36, *Pomp.* 30–36;) made it clear that the Gordyaeans were distinct from the Armenians, Armenian sources picture Gordyene as part of the fourth-century-CE Great Armenian Commonwealth in political, cultural, and religious terms. In particular, rulers of Korduk' are presented as taking part in Pan-Armenian national events under (more *de iure* than *de facto*) supervision of the Armenian kings (e.g. BP 3.9; 4.50). Likewise, Korduk' is depicted as the scene of missionary activity of several well-known religious figures traditionally seen as the Armenian national saints, patriarchs Gregory the Illuminator (Aa 842), Šalita, and Epip'an (BP 3.14).

81 Wheeler 2002, 89–90.

At same time, Gordyene is prominently present in the Syriac world. First, Gordyene comes to the fore in the Syriac Bible as the home to the landing site of Noah's ark. Second, numerous acts of ecclesiastical councils composed in Greek shows that the diocese of Beth Qardū (Gordyene) together with the dioceses of Beth Arzun (Arzanene), Beth Zabdai (Zabdikene), Beth Raḥimai (Rehimene), and Beth Moksāyē (Moxoene) firmly belonged to Syriac-Nestorian Christianity with its main center in Nisibis. Third, Syriac sources referring to monastic life thriving in Beth 'Arbāyē clearly shows that it took place not only in the Ṭūr 'Abdīn region (for which it is nowadays famous), but also in the mountains of Qardū (Gordyene) and Arzun (Arzanene).

All in all, it appears that the land of the Karduchoi presented by Xenophon in the fifth century BCE as a political and cultural enclave came under the influence of two main cultural influences, from Armenia in the north and from the Mesopotamian plain in the south. In terms of pure numbers, it appears that Gordyene's connection with Mesopotamian cultures was stronger. This conclusion also appears firmer if we take account of the exaggerating tendencies of the Armenian sources to see the *Transtigritanae regiones* as part of the Armenian commonwealth.

5.2 Ancient Routes in Gordyene

The fact that we hear of Gordyene (as the land of the Karduchoi) for the first time in ancient sources on account of an ancient route leading through this country (which was taken by the Greek army of the "Ten Thousand", see above) is very telling. Indeed, we also know that the two famous conquerors, Alexander the Great and Trajan, crossed the Tigris opposite the Gordyaeen Mountains (*Anab.* 3.7.7, Cass. Dio 68.26.1–2). This possibly occurred at the place known as "Ad flumen Tigrim" to the Peutinger Table (see chapter 1.4.).

In this light, it appears that Gordyene owed much of its political importance to its strategic location, since it straddled important lines of communication in the Upper Tigris region. In addition to the data gleaned from literary sources (see chapter 4.6.), major lines of communication in this area can be tentatively reconstructed on the basis of extant remains of ancient bridges, pavements, forts, settlements, and monumental rock-cut reliefs.⁸² In this regard, most tangible evidence comes from Late-Roman times (especially bridges and pavements), but in some cases it becomes evident that the route indicated by

82 Two essential publications on this topic are Dillemann 1962 and (with preference) Comfort 2009.

Roman remains also features earlier (Parthian in particular) remains, thus suggesting a great of continuity in the use of communication lines in this area. Besides this, the existence of routes in this area was always closely tied with the natural environment, which also limited the possibility of variations. It appears that the two main routes in this area were, first, the Bitlis Pass which led through the Tauros, past Lake Van, to Armenia (to Artaxata in particular), and second, the Tigris crossing, known as “Ad flumen Tigrim” in the Peutinger Table, which carried the route from Nisibis to Media and Babylonia.

The Bitlis Pass could be reached from two main directions in Mesopotamia: from Arzanene (understood as the area between the Batman and Bitlis/Bohtan rivers) and from Gordyene (east of the Bohtan).

The Bitlis Pass could be approached through Arzanene from two main directions (see Figure 31). First, it could be approached from the Late-Roman bridge at Harap on the Batman River (where it continued the route from Amida alongside the western Tigris until its confluence with the Batman where it moved upstream the Batman River), via Arzan and a valley branching northeast from the Garzan River to the Bitlis valley. Secondly, it could be approached from the Roman fort at Cephæ (where it continued the route from Nisibis), eastwards alongside the Tigris (via the junction of the Tigris and the Garzan at Şeyhose) to the junction of the Tigris with the Bohtan River at Çattepe/Tilli, at which point the road continued northwards to the Bitlis pass.⁸³

In the case of the route from Hasankeyf to Çattepe/Tilli, several Roman locations can be identified along this route. First, Hasankeyf can be identified as the Roman fortress Cephæ (see chapter 5.4.5.). Furthermore, remains of a paved Roman road were discovered east of Hasankeyf along the mountain ridge that follows the north bank of the Tigris.⁸⁴ This road crossed the Garzan at Şeyhose (37° 44'54" N, 41° 35'37" E⁸⁵) where ruins of a Roman bridge (ruins of an ancient church are also reported in the vicinity) were recently found.⁸⁶ This single stone arched bridge, built of stone blocks 30 × 70 cm, is located 16.4 km east-northeast of Hasankeyf, and measures approximately 30 m in length and 4.50 m in width.⁸⁷ Another important site on this route can be found at Çattepe (also known locally as Tilli or Til), which lies at the confluence of the

83 Comfort 2009, 27, 69, 116–125. Likewise Lightfoot 1986, 519.

84 Comfort 2009, 27, 69.

85 Comfort 2009, 68.

86 Algaze, Breuninger, Lightfoot, Rosenberg 1991, 219, fig. 10 (site no. 1 named Şeyh Hosal Köprü).

87 Comfort 2009, 69.

Tigris and Bohtan rivers (see below).⁸⁸ From Çattepe/Tilli the route must have continued northwards (some 11 km) until the point at which the modern bridge at Nasreddin (37°49'18" N, 41°49'44" E) crosses the Bitlis River.⁸⁹ Although it is only a matter of conjecture that the modern bridge had a Roman predecessor (due to the lack of physical remains), this suggestion is, however tentatively, enforced by the presence of an ancient settlement at the nearby Azakçe Tepe.⁹⁰

As far as the route from Gordyene is concerned, it essentially went along the Tigris and Bohtan rivers via Eski Finik up the Kazrik gorge towards present-day city of Şırnak, and further northwest via modern Eskieruh and Siirt⁹¹ to the Bitlis Pass.⁹² This route continued the road from Adiabene (via Arbela along the eastern bank of the Tigris). At the same time, however, it may have been joined by other routes from the Mesopotamian Valley (especially Nisibis) at a number of possible crossings points on the Tigris Eski Finik/Eski Hendek, Cizre, and Faysh Khabur) which were suggested as the site of "Ad flumen Tigrim" (the Peutinger Table).⁹³

There are several identifiable ancient remains (fortresses, reliefs, and bridges) on this route which enable us to follow the course of this route: a fortress complex at Eski Finik (see below), the Kazrik area (fortress and two reliefs, see below), another relief near the confluence of the Tigris and the Inlı rivers, and a possibly Roman bridge at Kırık (below Siirt on the Bohtan River).

The monumental relief on the eastern side of the Tigris gorge is located some 800 m south of the confluence of the Tigris and a small tributary, Inlı River.⁹⁴ It presents a human figure reclining on a couch, by the side of bird on the pedestal. To the right of the pedestal is a second standing human figure that wears loose-fitting trousers with heavy folds that are characteristic of Parthian art.⁹⁵ Between the figures are three panels of an Aramaic or

88 A detailed description of the site can be found in Lightfoot 1986. See also Algaze 1989, 254.

89 Comfort 2009, 93.

90 Algaze 1989, 268, fig. 12; Comfort 2009, 73.

91 It has been suggested that at the point of modern Siirt there may also have started an alternative route to Lake Van via Eski Hizan where ruins of a possibly ancient fortress are extant. According to Mitford 1986, the origin of the Eski Hizan fort was Roman, but this identification has been questioned by other scholars. See Comfort 2009, 117 and n. 234 on p. 360.

92 Comfort 2009, 117.

93 See Dillemann 1962, 147–192 (esp. fig. XVIII); Jankowska 1991, 229–231; Kaegi 2003, 166; Comfort 2009, 79.

94 Algaze, Breuninger, Lightfoot, Rosenberg 1991, 190.

95 Algaze, Breuninger, Lightfoot, Rosenberg 1991, 190.

early Parthian inscription dated (on paleographical grounds) to the early first century CE.⁹⁶

The remains of the bridge located on the route from Eski Finik to Bitlis Pass are known as the Kırk Bridge.⁹⁷ The ruins of Kırk Bridge on the Bohtan (37°48'47" N, 41°50'49" E) suggest a possibly Roman construction (as indicated by the form of a stone arch), which was later rebuilt using brick.⁹⁸ The bridge's construction likely included 7 arches and was 100 m long and 4 m.⁹⁹

5.3 Onomastic Data

5.3.1 *Toponyms*

Gordyene

It is frequently stated that Gordyene was “an apparently Kurdish or proto-Kurdish state,”¹⁰⁰ and that its population were ancestors of the modern Kurds.¹⁰¹ However, this identification, which is apparently based on the similarity of the names of the two peoples, the Καρδοῦχοι and the *Kurds* (as well as on a very partial overlap of the inhabited territories), is rejected by many scholars on linguistic grounds.¹⁰²

In terms of linguistic connections, the ancient root in question is Qardū (in Καρδοῦχοι, *Cordu-eni*, *Cordu-ena*, Γορδυ-ηνή, Γορδυ-αία, Γορδυ-αῖοι) and it is not akin to the root *Kurd*.¹⁰³ At the same time, the root *Kurd*- appears to correspond to the root *Kurt*.¹⁰⁴ Therefore, if any ancient people could be suggested as possible ancestors of the *Kurds*,¹⁰⁵ they are the Κύρτιοι (the Greek Κύρτιοι attested in Polyb. 5.52.5 and Strabo *Geog.* 11.13.3, 15.3.1, and the Latin

96 Algaze, Breuninger, Lightfoot, Rosenberg 1991, 190–191.

97 See Comfort 2009, 76–78.

98 Comfort 2009, 76.

99 Comfort 2009, 76.

100 Hewsen 1988–89, 281.

101 Weissbach 1919c, 1933–1934; Driver 1921, 563–572; Driver 1923, 393–403; Cook 1985, 257, n. 1; and many others. For instance, Burn 1985, 354 speak about “the Ten Thousand” marching through the land of the *Kurds* (or *Kurdestan*).

102 M. Hartmann 1897, 90–105; Nöldeke 1898, 78–81; Hübschmann 1904, 334; Minorsky 1940, 143–152; MacKenzie 1961, 68–69; Asatrian 2001, 51; Asatrian 2009, 25–26; R. Schmitt 2011a.

103 Nöldeke 1898, 78–81; Asatrian 2009, 25–26.

104 Nöldeke 1898, 78–81; Asatrian 2009, 25–26.

105 For a good review of all ancient “candidates” for the ancestors of the Kurds, see Nikitine 1956, 1–22.

Cyrtii or *Cyrtaei* known from Liv., 37.40.9 and 42.58.13).¹⁰⁶ The Κύρτιοι were a warlike nomadic people living in the Zagros Mountains who appear in sources as mercenary slingers—in the service of the Median governor, Molon against Antiochos III, but with Antiochos III against the Romans at Magnesia in 190 BCE, and again hired by Eumenes II, king of Pergamon at Kallinikos (171 BCE).¹⁰⁷ However, it appears that the name was applied to early-medieval Kurdish tribes not as an ethnic term but a social designation of nomadic way of life.¹⁰⁸

It should also be noted that a number of Armenian toponyms, which are frequently referred to Gordyene,¹⁰⁹ are in fact not linguistically akin to the root *Qardū*—*Korčēk'*, *Korčayk'*, and *Kordik'*, the only Armenian term akin to the root *Qardū* is *Korduk'*.¹¹⁰ In this sense, one may wonder if the appearance of apparently similar names (*Kordik'*, *Korčēk'*, *Korčayk'*) in Armenian sources does not reflect the migration of early Kurdish tribes rather than refer to the predecessors of ancient Καρδοῦχοι.¹¹¹

What is the origin, then, of the ethnonym Καρδοῦχοι? Two other explanations have been put forward. First, it has been suggested that the ethnonym Karduchoi is of Urartian origin (Hurro-Urartian) because of either the suffix—*uchi* in the name¹¹² or “a certain consonantal resemblance with the name of a people, Khaldī.”¹¹³ The first apparent similarity misses the point linguistically, as it does not address the root of the ethnonym; and the second similarity does not actually appear to be very close. Second, the root *Qardū* may be connected with the Akkadian *qardu* meaning “strong,” “heroic.”¹¹⁴ It appears that although there is no consensus about the origin of the ethnonym among scholars, the Semitic origin of the name Καρδοῦχοι is slightly favored by the other historical evidence (see below).¹¹⁵

The three main cities of Gordyene mentioned by Strabo *Geog.* 16.1.24–25 are Pinaka (Πίνακα), Sareisa (Σάρεϊσα), and Satalka (Σάταλκα). No suggestions

106 Nöldeke 1898, 78; Hübschmann 1904, 334; Minorsky 1940, 150; MacKenzie 1961, 68; Asatrian 2009, 26; R. Schmitt 2011a; Wiesehöfer 2012.

107 Reinach 1909, 115–119; Launey 1949, 581; Bar-Kochva 1976, 48–53; Wiesehöfer 2004, 11–23; R. Schmitt 2011a; Brentjes 2012.

108 Asatrian 2001 and Asatrian 2009.

109 See Hewsen 1988–89, pp. 289–295 and his many other publications.

110 Andreas 1894, 1490–1494; Nöldeke 1898, 71–81; M. Hartmann 1897, 96; Hübschmann 1904, 335; Minorsky 1940, 150–151.

111 Adontz, Garsoïan 1970, 323; Marciak 2013a, 153.

112 Melikishvili (*non vidi*) quoted by Diakonoff 1984, 114.

113 Minorsky 1927, 1133.

114 Minorsky 1927, 1133.

115 Sinclair 1989, 360–361.

for their etymologies have been put forward so far,¹¹⁶ although, in general, it has been suggested that the cities must have been “in existence well before Strabo’s time” (e.g. Sennacherib’s [705–681 BCE] inscription on the Cudi Dağ speaks about his conquest of seven (unnamed) towns in the region),¹¹⁷ and an attempt have been made to find their attestations in the Assyrian chronicles (Sareisa as Ši-ri-eš-še).¹¹⁸

Zabdikene

The name Zabdikene (Ζαβδικηνή, *Zabdicena*) is widely considered to be Semitic in origin, but its precise etymology is not evident. There can be no doubt that there is a linguistic connection between the name of the district Zabdikene and the name of its main city, Bezabde. Namely, it has been argued that the name of province is derived from the name of the city.¹¹⁹ What is more, it has suggested that the names in question are connected with the names of the Zab rivers.¹²⁰ This interpretation is problematic for geographical reasons. First, the exact extent of Zabdikene is not clear; second, the connection with the Great Zab (more likely than with the Little Zab located much more to the south) would imply the affiliation of the area near Nineveh with Zabdikene. The latter idea is not attested elsewhere, and this area has traditionally been seen as part of Assyria.

Arzanene

It is widely held that the Greek and Roman names of the province, Ἀρζανηνή and *Arzanena*, are coined after the name of the city Arzan (the city name also applied to the smaller region around the city).¹²¹ The name is believed to come from a local pre-Hellenistic name (the Armenian name of the province, *Ajnik*^c is also secondary towards the forms in question).¹²² It has been suggested that the name may go back to *Alzi*, attested in Urartian and Neo-Assyrian sources,¹²³

116 See Hübschmann 1904, 256, n. 2, 334–335, n. 2; Weissbach 1920b, 2497; Markwart 1930, 9–10; Dillemann 1962, 111; Syme 1995, 28–29; Sinclair 1989, 359.

117 Sinclair 1989, 359.

118 See Sachau 1897, 51–52. Sachau’s attempt is, however, seen today as unsuccessful. See Marciak 2012b, 192 (who consulted Langdon, Gardiner 1920, 196; del Monte, Tischler 1978, 360–361; Hawkins 1980–83, 338–340; Forlanini 1998, 221; Wilhelm 2009, 61–62).

119 Fraenkel 1897, 378; M. Streck 1903, 250; Treidler 1967b, 2201.

120 Treidler 1967b, 2203.

121 Hübschmann 1904, 248–251, 305–306, 310–312; Hewsen 1985, 76; Garsoïan 1989, 437–438.

122 Hübschmann 1904, 249–250, 310; Garsoïan 1989, 437–438.

123 Hübschmann 1904, 249–250, 310.

which is possible, but not beyond question, as the meaning of this term appears to vary in ancient sources.¹²⁴

Additionally, it should be noted that the toponym Arzanene and its cognates never appear as an ethnonym (unlike Gordyene in Petros Patrikios) or as an ethnic adjective.¹²⁵ In this light, Arzanene appears to be a country without regard to an ethnic entity.

Rehimene and Moxoene

Not only does the location of Rehimene remain an enigma (see chapter 4.7.), but also the etymology of this toponym is unknown. At the same time, two very tentative suggestions have been made. Namely, it has been suggested that the name is connected with the modern name of the river Ĵerm, but non-Armenian speakers could not pronounce the Armenian sound for the English ‘j’. Thus, a basic sound “ERM” has been produced which led to the Syriac Beth Raḥimai and Greek Rehimene.¹²⁶ At the same time, the interpretation of Rehimene as based on the Armenian toponym is controversial for two reasons. First, this province does not have an Armenian equivalent (unlike its neighbors, Sophene, Gordyene, Zabdikene, Arzanene), and second, the toponym features prominently in Syriac sources, and consequently it has been suspected as being Syriac in origin and character.¹²⁷

In turn, the toponym Moxoene appears in ancient sources only beginning in the fourth century CE (Amm. Marc. 23.3.5 and 25.7.9), but has a fitting Armenian equivalent in later Armenian sources: *Mokk’*. What is more, it is highly likely that this name is preserved in the name of a modern village, Möks on the Möks River, a northern tributary of the Bohtan River.¹²⁸ In this light, it may appear that the origin of the name is Armenian.¹²⁹ At the same time, an attempt has been made to find older pre-Armenian attestations of Moxoene. Several possible ethnonyms have been suggested: Μύκοι (Herodotus 7.68), Muški in Assyrian sources, τῶν Μοσχικῶν ὄρη (*Geog.* 11.2.15, *Geogr.* 5.13.2), or the Μοξικανοί (*Geogr.* 5.2.27),¹³⁰ but neither of them fulfills both the linguistic and

124 del Monte, Tischler 1978; Kessler 1995, 64; Barjamovic 2011, 129.

125 Hübschmann 1904, 248.

126 See Sinclair 1989, 366–367 and Hewsens 1992, 344 who reports and follows this phonetic explanation. Hewsens 1992, 344 however points to a village in the Siirt province called Rehina.

127 Toumanoff 1963, 182–183, n. 147.

128 Hübschmann 1904, 255; Fiey 1977, 185;

129 Toumanoff 1963, 182; Sinclair 1986, 366.

130 Hewsens 1992, 168 (with modifications).

geographical criterion at the same time. For instance, the terms τῶν Μοσχικῶν ὄρη and Μοξικανοί appear to be phonetically close, but the geographical location does not fit—τῶν Μοσχικῶν ὄρη are located in the Caucasus (according to *Geogr.* 5.13.2), while the Μοξικανοί is eastern Phrygia (see *Geogr.* 5.2.27).

5.3.2 *Anthroponyms*

Rulers of Gordyene

1. *Zarbienos* (Plut. *Luc.* 21.2, 29.6: Ζαρβιηνός). This name has been suggested to be of Iranian origin by F. Justi,¹³¹ who does not, however, provide any explanation. Iranian names were not uncommon in the ancient Near East, especially among its elites, who were sometimes influenced by Iranian culture.¹³² At the same time, one may wonder if the name is not Semitic in origin.
2. *Iovinianus* (Amm. Marc. 18.6.20); *Iovinianus* is clearly a Roman name.¹³³ That the ruler of Gordyene bore a typically Roman name can be explained by his personal history—he grew up in the Roman Empire; besides this, Roman culture was also present in the region. The name is coined after the divine name Iuppiter (Iovis).¹³⁴
3. *Jon* / *Čon* (BP 3.9) The name *Jon* is preserved in an Armenian source, the *Epic Histories* (BP 3.9), but such a name is not attested elsewhere in Armenian literature. It has been suggested it may perhaps be the Armenian rendering of the Roman name *Iovinianus* (consequently, *Iovinianus* and *Jon* would be either the same historical figure or closely related [e.g.: the father and his son]). Otherwise, the name could be emendated into *Čon*, an Armenian name.¹³⁵
4. *Bakur*: the prince of Arzanene (Ałjnik' neighboring on Gordyene) who rebelled against the Armenian king according to BP 3.9. This name (perhaps better known in the Greek form as Pakoros (Πάκορος) or in Latin as *Pacorus*) is definitely Iranian in origin, and goes back to the Old Iranian *bag-puhr meaning “son of a god.”¹³⁶

¹³¹ Justi 1895, 381.

¹³² See Garsoïan 1985 and Russell 2005, 23–40 for the fact that ancient Armenia was deeply penetrated by Iranian culture.

¹³³ Hoogendijk, Muhs 2008, 239.

¹³⁴ Hoogendijk, Muhs 2008, 239.

¹³⁵ Garsoïan 1989, 381.

¹³⁶ Garsoïan 1989, 363.

Ecclesiastical Figures

A large number of personal names held by figures connected with the region appear only in Syriac acts of ecclesiastical councils (see also chapter 5.1.3).

Bishops of Beth Qardū

5. *Miles*—attested at the synod of Dadišō' in 424 CE.¹³⁷ The origin of the name is uncertain.
6. *Barsauma*—attested at the synod of Mar Aba I in 554 CE,¹³⁸ and as a member of the Nestorian embassy sent by Persian king Khusro I to Emperor Justinian I in 563 CE.¹³⁹ The name is Syriac in origin (it consists of two elements—*bar* and a personal name, *Šauma*; a connection with Nabatean ברבעשמין = ברבעלשמין, meaning “le fils du Baal des cieux,” has also been suggested).¹⁴⁰
7. *Marutha*—attested at the synod of Gregory I in 605 CE.¹⁴¹ The name is Syriac in origin meaning “Mann des Fastens.” (see chapter 2.4.2.)

Bishops of Beth Arzun

8. *Daniel*—attested at the council of Seleucia-Ctesiphon in 410 CE,¹⁴² and at the synod of Dadišō' in 424 CE.¹⁴³ Daniel is a northwest Semitic name that belonged to a well-known Biblical figure.
9. *Job*—attested at the synod of Bāwai in 497 CE.¹⁴⁴ Job is a well-known Northwest Semitic name that belonged to the main figure of one of better-known biblical books.
10. *Ma'na*—attested through the connection with the patriarch of Nisibis, Mar Aba I (around 540–551 CE).¹⁴⁵ The origin of the name is uncertain.
11. *Išō'yahb*—attested as the bishop of Arzun through the connection with the Persian king Khusro I (before 579 CE, later known as Išō'yahb I, the metropolitan of Nisibis).¹⁴⁶ The name is Syriac in origin.

137 Chabot 1902, 285. See Garsoïan 1992, 54–55 and n. 66.

138 Chabot 1902, 366.

139 *Chron. Siirt* 2. 95. Fiey 1977, 175.

140 GEDSH 58; Schert 1971, 221, n. 2.

141 Chabot 1902, 478.

142 Chabot 1902, 272, 274, 285, 617.

143 Chabot 1902, 285.

144 Chabot 1902, 311.

145 *Chron. Siirt* 2.63. See Fiey 1977, 187.

146 *Chron. Siirt* 2.95. See Fiey 1977, 187–188.

12. *Ūkāmā*—attested as the bishop Arzun through the connection with patriarch *Išōʿyahb* II (628–645 CE).¹⁴⁷ The origin of the name is uncertain.
13. *Isaac* (Išḥaq)—attested as the bishop of Arzun though the connection with the patriarch Mar Emmeh (646 CE).¹⁴⁸ This name is a Northwest Semitic name borne by the well-known Biblical patriarch Isaac, son of Abraham.

Bishops of Ostan Arzun

14. *Samuel* (Šmuel)—attested at the Seleucia-Ctesiphon council in 410 CE.¹⁴⁹ This name is clearly a Northwest Semitic name that belonged to a famous Biblical figure who appointed David as the king of Israel.
15. *Yōḥannān*—attested at the synod of Dadišōʿ in 424 CE.¹⁵⁰ *Yōḥannān* (and its various forms) is a common Northwest Semitic name, widely used in both its Hebrew and Aramaic forms. However, it became very popular with Christians with regard to two Biblical figures: John the Baptist or John the Apostle.
16. *Natum*—attested at the synod of Joseph in 554 CE.¹⁵¹ The origin of the name is uncertain, perhaps it should be corrected to Northwest Semitic—נחום.

Bishop of Beth Zabdai

17. *Yōḥannān*—attested at the synod of Babai in 497 CE.¹⁵² See above.

Bishop of Beth Raḥimai

18. *Abraham*—attested at the synod of Mar Isaac in 410 CE.¹⁵³ This name is of course a well-known Northwest Semitic name borne by the patriarch Abraham, considered by the Jews and the New Testament traditions as their great forefather.

¹⁴⁷ *Chron. Siirt* 2.262–263. See Fiey 1977, 188.

¹⁴⁸ *Chron. anon.* 27. See Fiey 1977, 189 and Luther 1997, 262–263.

¹⁴⁹ Chabot 1902, 272, 274, 617.

¹⁵⁰ Chabot 1902, 285.

¹⁵¹ Chabot 1902, 366, no. 26.

¹⁵² Chabot 1902, 310–311, 316.

¹⁵³ Chabot 1902, 272, 617.

Bishops of Beth Moksāyē

19. *Daniel*—attested at the synod of Mar Isaac in 410 CE.¹⁵⁴ See above.
20. *Atticus*—attested at the synod of Dadīšōʿ in 424 CE.¹⁵⁵ This Greek name meant originally someone who came from Attica (Attic, Athenian, of Attic breed).¹⁵⁶ However, in time its Greek (Ἀττικός) and Latin (Atticus) forms became very popular regardless of ethnic origins of the name-bearers.

Other Names

21. *Mare*—a wealthy man from Qardū, the owner of a slave called Barsauma who later became the metropolitan of Nisibis (460–491 CE).¹⁵⁷ This name is possibly a variant of the name Mar, the etymology of which is not entirely clear—it could be either of Iranian (*Māda- meaning a *Mede*) or, more likely, of Syriac (Mār: *my lord*) origin.¹⁵⁸ However, the literary, geographical, and cultural context appears to favor the Syriac etymology.
22. *Antonios Domittianos* (probably late second or early third century CE),¹⁵⁹ a veteran Roman soldier who founded the altar to Zeus Olympios found near modern Çattepe. The Roman veteran was probably a local who used Aramaic as his first language. Both names are Latin—Antonius and Domitianos (but here engraved in Greek).¹⁶⁰ The names are the result of his military career he pursued in Roman legions. In this sense, his name is the witness of Romanization, but only in an indirect sense, as Antonios Domittianos most likely adopted Roman-Greek culture in his service outside Gordyene.

5.3.3 Summary

To summarize, when it comes to the toponyms attested within the larger territory of Gordyene, it should be noted that our data is very limited, and what's more, that the origin of many toponyms remains uncertain. What can be stated, however, is that the general pattern is that of both the continuity of

¹⁵⁴ Chabot 1902, 272, 616, 617–619.

¹⁵⁵ Chabot 1902, 285.

¹⁵⁶ TLL I.1132–1139.

¹⁵⁷ Chabot 1902, 308, n. 1; Garsoïan 1992, 67, n. 111.

¹⁵⁸ R. Schmitt 1996, 692; Segert 1986, 541.

¹⁵⁹ AE 1991, no. 1581.

¹⁶⁰ TLL II. 188–189.

the local nomenclature going back to pre-Hellenistic times and the significant presence of Semitic elements.

With regard to the personal names of the kings and rulers of Gordyene, our data shares the same limitations as that of the toponyms from Gordyene—a low number of referenced cases and prevailing uncertainties in identifications. Namely, we know of only four names, two of which are uncertain, one is of Iranian origin, and one Roman. Generally speaking, the two identified names (from the 4th century CE) reflect the main geopolitical tendencies in the region during the fourth century CE, which experienced a prolonged period of competition between the Roman Empire and the Sasanians over the control of Northern Mesopotamia

In the case of the names of the Christian ecclesiastical leaders of the region (fifth-seventh centuries CE), eight names are Northwest Semitic/Biblical, eight Syriac, and two Greek. The fact that there is a large number of Biblical names is not surprising at all, and it conforms well to the widespread custom among late Antique Christian communities to choose the personal names of Biblical figures or early Christian saints. Such names do not appear to point to the ethnicity of their bearers. The Greek/Hellenistic names of course suggest some amount of influence on the part of the Hellenistic culture on the region. Above all, a large group of names are Syriac, which suggests that the region's population consisted of native Syriac speakers and that the region belonged to the sphere of Syriac ecclesiastical culture, which perhaps found its most vivid expression in the monastic life of the mountains of ʿTūr ʿAbdīn and Qardū.

5.4 Archaeological Sites

5.4.1 *The Bohtan Valley and Çattepe*

The preliminary survey of the Ilısu Project did not reveal any substantial architectural remains in the Bohtan valley for the period in question (except Çattepe, see below). However, the survey did unearth some pottery. In this way its results allow us to tentatively reconstruct the distribution of sites and, as a result, the basic settlement pattern in this area from prehistoric to medieval times.

Several preliminary observations made on the basis of the available ceramic data are possible.¹⁶¹ First, it appears either that a substantial gap occurred in the inhabitation of the Bohtan valley in the late Bronze Age and early Iron Age, or that the settlement was sparse. This suggests the limited influence of

161 Velibeyoğlu, A. Schachner, S. Schachner 2002, 840–842.

the nearby superregional powers, the kingdoms of Mitanni and Assyria.¹⁶² The lack of pottery with decorated grooves, which was widespread in the early Iron Age from the Upper Tigris Valley to Lake Urmia and the Armenian highlands, is especially striking. Only from the ninth century BCE on did a new settlement appear to have begun; however, pottery finds are rare for the early and middle Iron Age. This may also suggest that, in political terms, this area was left as a buffer zone between two competing kingdoms of Urartu and Assyria.¹⁶³ Only in the late Iron Ages did the number of sites considerably increase. The pottery appears to be a simple local product highly distinctive from earlier periods and from contemporary types of ceramics attested in neighboring areas in Armenia (in the north), Upper Tigris Valley, and North Mesopotamia. Given the historical sources, this settlement can be connected with the people known as the Karduchoi. The available preliminary data on the material culture in this area in the late Iron Age turns out to be in a surprising agreement with the picture of an isolated and regionally distinctive population gained from Xenophon.

The site of Çattepe (known locally as Tilli or Til) is a roughly triangular mound located at the confluence of the Tigris (to the west) and Bohtan (to the east) rivers, and occupies approximately 1.2 hectares (see Figures 37–38).¹⁶⁴

Although the site most likely featured a continuous occupation (varying in extent) from prehistoric until medieval (13th/14th centuries CE) times (indicated by an almost continuous record of ceramic),¹⁶⁵ it has attracted scholarly attention mainly due to the existence of impressive ruins of a Roman fortification, especially the remains of girdling walls and towers (the mound is nowadays occupied by remains of older Kurdish buildings and several modern houses, all built on top of older structures). The remains on the eastern and northern sides of the site are minimal, while the remains of the western side are better preserved (see Figures 39–40).¹⁶⁶ They feature large portions of the wall (2.5 m thick) studded with solid towers.¹⁶⁷ Two towers are roughly rectangular or semi-circular and built of coursed masonry over a rubble core encased in lime mortar.¹⁶⁸ Another tower (the most massive one located at the

162 Velibeyoğlu, A. Schachner, S. Schachner 2002, 840–841; Radner, A. Schachner 2001, 723–779.

163 See Radner, A. Schachner 2001, 723–779; Radner 2011, 734–751; Radner 2012, 243–264.

164 Lightfoot 1986, 512. For descriptions of the structure, see Lightfoot 1986; Algaze 1989, 254; and Velibeyoğlu, A. Schachner, S. Schachner 2002, 841–847, which definitely offers the most thorough description of the girdling walls.

165 Velibeyoğlu, A. Schachner, S. Schachner 2002, 848–850.

166 Algaze 1989, 254; Velibeyoğlu, A. Schachner, S. Schachner 2002, 841.

167 Algaze 1989, 254; Velibeyoğlu, A. Schachner, S. Schachner 2002, 841.

168 Algaze 1989, 254; Velibeyoğlu, A. Schachner, S. Schachner 2002, 841.

northwest corner of the mound) has a rounded face with roughly shaped ashlar and containing a rubble core.¹⁶⁹ Remarkably, a masonry stub (approximately 3×3 m) can be seen in the river's mid-stream opposite the western section of the girdling wall. This element has repeatedly been identified as remains of the pillar of a bridge across the Tigris,¹⁷⁰ but this identification is far from being certain. Nothing is known of the route south of the river and consequently the remains may alternatively be identified as the breakwater of a river harbor.¹⁷¹

Pottery sherds collected on the mound included mainly numerous thin reddish Roman wares (for other types sparsely attested to, see below), as well as incised and glazed pottery (Byzantine or early Islamic).¹⁷² Furthermore, a sherd scatter (380×200 m)¹⁷³ of the same kinds of ceramics¹⁷⁴ was also identified north of the fortification area, which tentatively points to extramural settlement ("vicus") in the Roman-Byzantine or early Islamic periods.¹⁷⁵

Two Roman bronze coins were also found north of the fortification area. In the case of the first coin, the obverse features a radiate and cuirassed bust of an emperor, and the reverse presents two full-length figures. The obverse of the second coin depicts a bust of a clean-shaven emperor who wears a jeweled diadem, and the reverse shows two military figures holding spears and standards.¹⁷⁶ The problem with the identification of both coins is that inscriptions and mintmarks were hardly preserved.¹⁷⁷ However, the designs of the coins allow for tentative identifications. In the first case, Roman coins with radiate busts (known as "radiates") were particularly popular in the last quarter of the third century CE. In turn, two full-length figures (without military insignia) likely represent another design popular at that time, i.e., the motif of

169 Lightfoot 1986, 514; Algaze 1989, 254; Velibeyoğlu, A. Schachner, S. Schachner 2002, 841.

170 Lightfoot 1986, 514; Velibeyoğlu, A. Schachner, S. Schachner 2002, 846. By contrast, local informants (autopsy 20 June 2014) suggest that the stub is actually part of the wall which collapsed into the river due to seasonal flooding. This is unlikely because the remains are mainly built of bricks and the corresponding parts of the girdling walls opposite the stub do not contain this building material. So Velibeyoğlu, A. Schachner, S. Schachner 2002, 846.

171 Comfort 2009, 328.

172 Algaze 1989, 254; Velibeyoğlu, A. Schachner, S. Schachner 2002, 841.

173 According to Velibeyoğlu, A. Schachner, S. Schachner 2002, 848, the size is 200×220 m.

174 Velibeyoğlu, A. Schachner, S. Schachner 2002, 848 is followed here. By contrast, Algaze 1989, 254 reported the lack of the reddish Roman pottery in the vicus.

175 Algaze 1989, 254; Velibeyoğlu, A. Schachner, S. Schachner 2002, 847.

176 Lightfoot 1986, 517.

177 Lightfoot 1986, 517.

CONCORDIA MILITUM showing two figures (usually the emperor and the deity) clasping hands.¹⁷⁸ In this light, the coins have been tentatively attributed to the Tetrarchic series of the last quarter of the third century CE.¹⁷⁹

In the case of the second coin, the design of two military figures with spears and standards likely represents the GLORIA EXERCITUS series, which were common under the Constantinian dynasty (Constantine I, Dalmatius, Constantine II, Constans, Constantius II)¹⁸⁰ and are consequently dated to the first half of the fourth century CE.¹⁸¹

What is more, a spectacular artifact was revealed in 1990 (by villagers): a rectangular four-sided horned altar.¹⁸² The altar (maximum height—0.70 m) is made of white limestone and bears a bilingual inscription on its two opposite sides (in Greek and Aramaic); on two of its other sides, the altar bears identical bulls heads in relief.¹⁸³ The inscription (seven lines including eight extant words), dated on paleographical grounds to the late second or early third century CE,¹⁸⁴ recalls a dedication made by a Roman veteran soldier, Antonios Domittianos to Zeus Olympios.¹⁸⁵ From the linguistic and epigraphic points of view, the text appears to have been primarily composed in Aramaic and only translated into Greek. This is especially true of the divine title, preserved in Greek as $\mu\alpha\rho\eta[\alpha]\lambda\lambda\eta$, which can only be understood as a Greek reflex of the Semitic title *mrh'* meaning literally "Lord of the Gods."¹⁸⁶ Likewise the spelling of the veteran's name, Domittianos ($\Delta\omicron\mu\iota\tau\tau\iota\alpha\nu\acute{o}\varsigma$) is distinctively Eastern.¹⁸⁷ All in all, Antonios Domittianos has been identified as a local who "had returned home after his years of service in the army, having gained his Roman citizenship and name, as well as a certain degree of Graeco-Roman culture."¹⁸⁸ Given the fact that this altar is dated to before 298 CE, this find suggests that the

178 Sutherland 1967, 621–622; nos. 60b, 62b; pl. 15, 60a.

179 Lightfoot 1986, 517, 523.

180 Bruun 1966, 693, nos. 85–86, 697 no. 108; Kent 1981, 515 nos. 41, 49, 51 and pl. 26.

181 Lightfoot 1986, 517–518, 523.

182 See Lightfoot, Healey 1991; as well as Algaze, Breuninger, Lightfoot, Rosenberg 1991, 192 and AE 1991, no. 1581.

183 Lightfoot, Healey 1991, 1.

184 AE 1991, no. 1581.

185 Lightfoot, Healey 1991, 2–3; Algaze, Breuninger, Lightfoot, Rosenberg 1991, 192; AE 1991, no. 1581.

186 This title is attested in Edessa and Hatra in the second-century-CE inscriptions. See Drijvers, Healey 1999, 80.

187 Lightfoot, Healey 1991, 3, n. 11.

188 Lightfoot, Healey 1991, 3.

Romans could enlist mercenaries from this area even before they took firmer control of the *Transtigritanae regiones* in 298 CE.¹⁸⁹

A new tentative dating of the Roman fortress and the vicus has recently been suggested by the Ilisu archaeological team, which distinguished three tentative phases of the development of the girdling walls and connected these phases with pottery finds.¹⁹⁰ Namely, it has been suggested that the second main phase (mainly built of limestone) can be distinguished by the find of items of brittle ware on the mound and pottery items with diamond-shaped stamps, characteristic in this region of the third and fourth centuries CE. Consequently the first phase of Roman construction (lower part of the walls built of black basalt stones and medium-size white limestone) must be dated to before the third and fourth centuries CE, that is, it most likely comes from the second century CE. Given the historical data (Persian takeover of Gordyene before 358 CE and the incorporation of the area east of the Batman in 363 CE), the second phases has been dated to about the middle of the fourth century CE.

5.4.2 *The Cizre Dam and Cizre-Silopi Plain Survey*

The Cizre Dam and Cizre-Silopi Plain Survey were conducted between 1988 and 1990.¹⁹¹ The survey concerned two areas: the Cizre Dam Reservoir (north of Cizre, within the gorges created by the Tigris and Kızıl rivers) and the Cizre-Silopi plains (south and southeast of Cizre, in the area marked by the Tigris, Eastern Khabur and Hezil rivers).¹⁹² Concerning the Hellenistic to Sasanian periods, the main body of evidence consists of pottery finds unearthed both in the Cizre Dam Reservoir area and on the Cizre-Silopi plains. However, important architectural remains were also identified in two areas—that of Kazrik Boğazi some 9 km north of Cizre (near the confluence of the Tigris with Kızıl rivers) and the area of Eski Finik and Eski Hendek some 18 km upstream of Cizre.

Available pottery data allows us to reconstruct the general nature of sites and their distribution, and consequently gain some understanding of the settlement pattern in this area from Hellenistic to early Islamic periods. Nineteen sites were assigned to the Hellenistic (4th BCE to 1st BCE) period (mainly due

189 According to Comfort 2009, 328, the case of Antonios Domittianos may suggest that the fortress itself may be of the same period, i.e. before the treaty of 298 CE.

190 Velibeyoğlu, A. Schachner, S. Schachner 2002, 851–852.

191 See Algaze 1989, 248–252; Algaze, Breuninger, Lightfoot, Rosenberg 1991, 191–192; Algaze, Hammer, Parker 2012, 2, 39–45 (the final report on the Cizre Dam and Cizre-Silopi Plain Survey).

192 Algaze, Hammer, Parker 2012, 2.

to characteristic red-brown slipped pottery), while eight (or nine) sites were identified as belonging to the Parthian (1st BCE–3rd CE) period (particularly due to grainy, metallic, pale green, or blue-green glazes).¹⁹³ In light of the available data, in the Hellenistic and Parthian period, the settlement was of an undifferentiated rural character, with only one urban center at the fortress town of Eski Finik.¹⁹⁴ Furthermore, only four sites could be assigned to the Late Roman period in fourth century CE (characteristic ribbed, bridle cooking pots and amphorae handles with three characteristic grooves), two of which were military foundations.¹⁹⁵ In the Sasanian/early Islamic period (sixth to ninth centuries CE; marked by the presence of distinctive pale buff or greenish-buff wares), the settlement remained rural in character, but the number of sites increased to 21.¹⁹⁶

All in all, the evidence from the Cizre Dam and Cizre-Silopi Plain Survey shows that the Hellenistic period was a time of great prosperity in the region and the economic decrease in this area coincided with the intensification of Byzantine-Sasanian Wars. At the same time, a return to a relative prosperity from the sixth century CE on may be interpreted as a result of a higher degree of political control over this area by one side, in this case by the Sasanians.¹⁹⁷

5.4.3 *Eski Finik and Eski Hendek*

The survey conducted by G. Algaze and his team in 1988–89 revealed a number of massive structures located on both banks of the Tigris River in the vicinity of the modern village of Damlarca (also known as Eski Fenik or Eski Yapı) on the eastern bank and the modern village of Hendek on the western bank.

The area on the eastern side of the Tigris is marked the presence of three natural phenomena—the Tigris River, the Cudi Dağı, and a spring-fed stream forming a steep ravine through the peaks of neighboring Cudi Dağı before the stream empties into the Tigris (see Figures 41–42). Several structures were located on successive terraces of the Cudi Dağı overlooking the east bank of the Tigris:

- three hilltop forts of various sizes on either side of a steep ravine formed by the stream (Figure 41: nos. 5, 6, 8);¹⁹⁸

¹⁹³ Algaze, Hammer, Parker 2012, 39–40.

¹⁹⁴ Algaze, Hammer, Parker 2012, 40.

¹⁹⁵ Algaze, Hammer, Parker 2012, 40.

¹⁹⁶ Algaze, Hammer, Parker 2012, 41.

¹⁹⁷ Likewise Ball 1996, 418 with regard to the survey area in northern Iraq.

¹⁹⁸ Algaze, Hammer, Parker 2012, 42.

- numerous rock-cut chambers on both sides of the ravine (likely used as both tombs and dwellings, Figure 41: no. 9);¹⁹⁹
- a Parthian relief (no. 14) on a route from the Tigris valley into the Cudi Dağı (Figure 41: no. 14);²⁰⁰

A number of structures were also located on the first broad terrace parallel to the Tigris: (see nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 10, 11 on Figure 41 and the descriptions below):²⁰¹

Structure no. 2 was interpreted as a small corner remain (ca. 40 m ESE-WNW and 20 m NNW-SSE) of what used to be a fortress roughly trapezoidal in shape and built of large, roughly coursed ashlar blocks; its wall was studded with massive rounded towers placed at intervals of about 20 meters.²⁰²

Directly east of structure no. 2 was a large fortress (nos. 3–4) roughly trapezoidal in shape whose southern external wall formed a contour parallel to the Tigris (at least 130 m long, no. 3), but the eastern wall was perpendicular to the river (some 220 m long, no. 4), and went directly upslope in the direction of the hilltop fort no. 8.²⁰³ The walls (partly preserved up to 9 m in height) were studded with regularly spaced rectangular projections (ca. 2.5–3 m in width, which apparently served as towers);²⁰⁴ the pottery finds included Hellenistic Megarian Ware and typically Parthian green/blue glazed fish bowls.²⁰⁵

The structures (no. 1) at the top of a low promontory directly overlooking the Tigris included remains of two buildings (distinct but abutting) and covered an area of at least 40–50 square meters;²⁰⁶ their walls were built of alternating

199 Algaze, Hammer, Parker 2012, 42; Algaze 1989, 250.

200 Algaze, Hammer, Parker 2012, 42.

201 Number 10 is only briefly discussed by Algaze 1989, 249 together with structure no 1: “two mounds, one on each side of the stream ... Paved floors and walls from substantial buildings (ca. 1.5 m wide) can be seen eroding out of the slopes of each mound. These are built by a construction technique based on alternating rows of ashlar blocks and bands of thin baked bricks, a masonry type which indicates a Late Roman or Byzantine date. Pottery collected from a section made into one of the mounds by a bulldozer cutting a road suggests the former (red/brown washed wares). A massive retaining wall (ca. 1.5 m wide, 12 m long, and 20 m high) built of cut basalt blocks lines the northwestern slope of the lowest of the two mounds and separates it from the stream nearby, thus protecting the structures on top from erosion.” Structures nos. 11 and 12 have not been discussed by Algaze 1989 or Algaze, Hammer, Parker 2012.

202 Algaze, Hammer, Parker 2012, 42.

203 Algaze, Hammer, Parker 2012, 42–43; Algaze 1989, 249.

204 Algaze, Hammer, Parker 2012, 42–43.

205 Algaze, Hammer, Parker 2012, 42–43.

206 Algaze, Hammer, Parker 2012, 43.

rows of stone blocks (both limestone and basalt) and thin baked bricks.²⁰⁷ This kind of construction technique is characteristic only for the Late Roman and Early Byzantine periods²⁰⁸ and was also used for the structure at Eski Hendek.²⁰⁹

Structure no. 13 is described by Algaze as traces of a retaining wall protecting mound no. 1 from flooding; the wall is reported to have been traceable for at least 24 m.²¹⁰

Structure no. 15 is reported by Algaze to have been slight mounding possibly indicating further occupation to the east of the wall; surface finds included sherds of typically Hellenistic (red/brown washed wares) and Parthian (blue/green glazed pieces, “fish bowls”) pottery.²¹¹

Concerning the Parthian relief, it is badly eroded, but a few details could still be made out:²¹² it depicts standing figures (dressed in loosely fitting trousers with heavy folds), each raising its left hand. Between the two figures is an inscription, now illegible, but once possibly Aramaic. The relief has been tentatively dated (on the basis of its stylistic features) to the period between the second half of the second century CE or the beginning of the third century CE.²¹³

The remains of structures at Eski Hendek are located on a natural rise overlooking the west bank of the Tigris.²¹⁴ The main structure was a large square building (ca. 275 m per side) and had a double enclosure wall with rounded corner towers;²¹⁵ the moat carved out of bedrock could be found on its southern and eastern sides and is between 12 and 30 m wide.²¹⁶ The fortress' towers consisted of alternating rows of stone blocks (mixed limestone and basalt) and thin (4.5–5 cm high and 24 cm wide) baked bricks laid in bands three to four bricks thick.²¹⁷ Another structure, located to the west of the square fortification, was trapezoidal in shape and has massive, regularly spaced, rounded towers; this structure was interpreted as a later addition to the square fortress. Taken together they covered an area of almost 0.5 km long and 130 to 275 m

207 Algaze, Hammer, Parker 2012, 43.

208 See Winfield, Foss 1986.

209 Algaze, Hammer, Parker 2012, 43.

210 Algaze 1989, 249.

211 Algaze 1989, 249.

212 See Layard 1853, 44–45; Bell 1911, 299, fig. 190; Nogaret 1984, 263–264; and Algaze 1989, 250.

213 Nogaret 1984, 257–268.

214 Algaze, Hammer, Parker 2012, 43.

215 Algaze, Hammer, Parker 2012, 43.

216 Algaze, Hammer, Parker 2012, 43.

217 Algaze, Hammer, Parker 2012, 43.

wide.²¹⁸ What is more, signs of extramural habitation areas were detected outside the walled area: to the east of the fortress were ruins of walls including remains of a coherent (square or rectangular) building (no. 11),²¹⁹ while to the west of the trapezoidal structure, a sherd and baked brick scatter was identified (no. 10).²²⁰ All in all, the remains at Eski Hendek suggested a substantial settlement (mainly of military character) covering an area of at least 800×300 m (24 ha).²²¹

Some 45 bronze coins were found in the vicinity of the fortress at Eski Hendek, out of which 28 specimen are well preserved.²²² In this group, three coins can be attributed to Constantine I, two coins to Constantine II as Caesar, and 22 to Constantius II, and only one to Arcadius.²²³ Thus, the major numismatic body comes from the timespan between 312 CE and 361 CE,²²⁴ which suggests that the Roman fortress was established in the fourth century CE, probably by Constantius II.²²⁵

According to the excavators, the structure on the western bank at Hendek can be identified as Bezabde, the Roman fortress city recalled by Ammianus Marcellinus (20.7.1); the structures on the east bank of the Tigris at Eski Finik can be identified as Pinaka, one of the three main cities of Gordyene mentioned by Strabo (*Geog.* 16.1.24).²²⁶

Three important details appear to be in accordance with this identification. First, it has been suggested that the modern name of the village Eski Finik (Fenek/Fenik) linguistically corresponds to the Greek name used by Strabo, Pinaka (Πίνακα).²²⁷

Second, out of the three main cities of Gordyene mentioned by Strabo (Sareisa, Satalka, and Pinaka), it is only Pinaka that is described by Strabo in further detail, which implies that it was the most impressive fortress in Gordyene. According to Strabo, Pinaka had three citadels “each enclosed by a separate fortification of its own, so that they constitute, as it were, a triple city.”²²⁸ The archaeological data does not appear to be precise enough to distinguish concrete structures at modern Eski Finik as any of Strabo’s three fortresses,

218 Algaze, Hammer, Parker 2012, 43.

219 Algaze, Hammer, Parker 2012, 43–44.

220 Algaze, Hammer, Parker 2012, 44.

221 Algaze, Hammer, Parker 2012, 44.

222 Söylemez, Lightfoot 1991, 315, 318–321.

223 Söylemez, Lightfoot 1991, 318–321.

224 Söylemez, Lightfoot 1991, 315.

225 Söylemez, Lightfoot 1991, 315.

226 Algaze, Hammer, Parker 2012, 44; Algaze 1989, 252.

227 Weissbach 1920b, 2497; Markwart 1930, 9–10; Dillemann 1962, 111.

228 H.L. Jones 1930, 230–232.

but, generally speaking, it is evident that the Eski Finik area featured an unusual accumulation of military structures, apparently forming a well-planned system of defense. In this broad sense, the archaeological data at Eski Finik fits Strabo's description of Pinaka.

Third, when it comes to Bezabde, one very intriguing detail comes to the fore in Ammianus' report: according to Ammianus, the ancient name of Bezabde was *Phaenicha*. It has been suggested that *Phaenicha* can also be understood as a form of Pinaka.²²⁹ What is more, Ammianus' reference to Bezabde, the fortress on the western (southern) bank of the Tigris as *Phaenicha* may be influenced by the existence of the older and larger structure which would have been located on the eastern bank of the Tigris (*Phaenicha* = Finik).²³⁰ In this sense, Ammianus' reference may imply that both structures formed one complex in Ammianus' time. Archaeological data clearly shows that the structure on the western bank of the Tigris (Bezabde) was a large Roman fortress from the fourth century CE (especially 312–361 CE), and that some structures on the eastern bank (on the promontory of the Tigris) were of the same period and likely formed one military complex with the fortress on the western bank. All in all, the identification of the fortress at Hendek as Bezabde and the structures at Eski Finik as Strabo's Pinaka seems to be very likely.

5.4.4 *Kazrik Boğazı*

A settlement complex at Kazrik Boğazı is located some 9 km north of the modern town of Cizre. Kazrik Boğazı itself is a narrow pass (some 60 m wide) where the Kızıl River cuts through the Cudi Dağı before it empties into the Tigris River (see Figures 43–44).²³¹

The area features remains of a number of ancient structures:

- two stone fortresses (built of coursed limestone and basalt masonry set in lime cement) located on a ledge overlooking the Kızıl River on its east side.²³²
- two monumental rock-cut reliefs on the western side of the Kızıl River. One of them is now completely eroded,²³³ while the other one presents a

229 Tuch 1847, 58.

230 Matthews 1989, 487, n. 7; Söylemez, Lightfoot 1991, 315.

231 Algaze, Hammer, Parker 2012, 44–45.

232 Algaze 1989, 248; Algaze, Hammer, Parker 2012, 45. Not to be confused with “a small nineteenth-century fort erected by a local sheikh to control the pass” located directly opposite the two fortresses. See Algaze 1989, 248.

233 See Layard 1853, 46 (who speaks of “a single figure”, but does not give any further details) and Algaze 1989, 249. See also Nogaret 1984, 264–266; Mathiesen 1992, 185 (no. 147); Algaze, Hammer, Parker 2012, 45.

mounted warrior with a sword in his belt (see Figure 45).²³⁴ The state of preservation is so bad that only a general affiliation of the relief as a Parthian artwork can be suggested.²³⁵

- ruins of an ancient bridge, nowadays called the Bürüçek Bridge,²³⁶ which is located some 1.8 km from the confluence of the Kızıl River with the Tigris (37°22'51"N, 42°10'07"E).²³⁷ The bridge is built of large ashlar blocks for the facing, with a rubble core (which appears to be Roman masonry).²³⁸ The remains still include three piers, but given the river's proportion (length of the river bed measures 150 m), they may originally have been as many as nine piers.²³⁹ The best preserved pier features remains of the pillar that is 3.8 m long and 6.2 m broad.²⁴⁰
- traces of a small settlement (approximately 180 m × 140 m and roughly trapezoidal in shape) located south of the pass where the Kızıl River opens into a wider plain.²⁴¹ The remains included traces of a girdling wall, isolated rooms, an aqueduct (cut into the rock on the river's north bank at the beginning of the Kızıl gorge), and a paved road (along the length of the pass leading to the Bürüçek bridge).²⁴² Surface pottery finds were rare and poorly preserved, but these were tentatively identified as Parthian (blue/green glazed sherds).²⁴³ Given the character of the pottery finds and the stylistic features of the relief, the primary use of the settlement was tentatively dated to the Parthian period.²⁴⁴

5.4.5 *Hasankeyf*

The site of Hasankeyf is located at approximately at 37°42'40"N, 41°24'43"E, on the south bank of the Tigris River at an elevation 540 m. (see Figure 46).²⁴⁵

234 Nogaret 1984, 264–266; Mathiesen 1992, 185 (no. 147); Algaze, Hammer, Parker 2012, 45.

235 Nogaret 1984, 266; Layard 1853, 46; Bell 1911, 298; Algaze 1989, 249 ("Parthian or Sasanian").

236 Algaze 1989, 249 speaks of two more ancient bridges: "two other ruined bridges over the Kızıl River some 1.5 km downstream may have also been connected to this road (fig. 5, no. 1), but if so, traces of the intervening stretch have been obliterated by recent construction activities."

237 Comfort 2009, 76.

238 Comfort 2009, 77.

239 Comfort 2009, 76–77.

240 Comfort 2009, 77.

241 Algaze 1989, 248; Algaze, Hammer, Parker 2012, 45.

242 Algaze 1989, 248; Comfort 2009, 77; Algaze, Hammer, Parker 2012, 45.

243 See Algaze 1989, 248; Algaze 2012, 84, fig. 14, nos. 17–23.

244 Algaze 1989, 248; Algaze 2012, 45.

245 Comfort 2009, 289.

The city enjoyed its greatest prosperity in the Middle Ages as the principal seat of the Artukid dynasty and a caravan stop en route from Diyarbakır to Baghdad via Cizre. Consequently, most of its monuments are in fact medieval. This refers to the most-well-known landmark of modern Hasankeyf in particular, the bridge known as Eski Köprü (see Figures 47–48). It can be speculated, however, that this mediaeval bridge must have had a Roman predecessor, since traces of a Roman road connecting Hasankeyf with Çattepe/Tilli are known.²⁴⁶

As far as the settlement is concerned, three main sections can be distinguished: the upper town/citadel, the lower town, and the area on the other side of the Tigris. Roman surface remains have been indicated at the southern tip of the citadel.²⁴⁷ In turn, the excavations within the scope of the Ilısu project from 1998 to 2002 were in fact focused on medieval strata. However, after 2002, i.e., after the last official report, excavations also revealed older strata, especially of Roman times. In 2005 and 2007, remains of structures identified by the excavators as the base of a Roman gateway to the citadel and Roman shops were discovered.

The structure identified as the gate²⁴⁸ (built of square blocks of cut stones onto the bedrock using the corbelling technique) was attached to the bedrock by retaining walls. The gate opening is 2.28 m high and 2.0 m wide. The depth of the interior is 4.93 m, and the length of exterior wall is 7.60 m. The structure is reinforced with two pillars on the southernmost corner. On the southeastern corner, there is an opening 1.35 m high and 0.98 wide. Four water channel pipes were also unearthed in the foundation. Pieces of decorative wall mosaic were also found. This structure can be interpreted as the first fort gate, possibly from the fourth century CE.²⁴⁹

The structures identified as Roman shops²⁵⁰ (later modified in medieval times) were found on the gateway to the citadel. It appears that the passage from the Roman gateway to the citadel was created before Roman times by carving a massive rock. Roman shops were built with regular cut-stones on top of the workshops carved into the bedrock. The workshops were used for grape press, wheat grinding and dough kneading.

Though the evidence of Roman occupation in Hasankeyf is still meager, it reinforces the idea of Hasankeyf not only as a military base, but also as a city that arose next to the fortress.

246 Comfort 2009, 63–64, 289.

247 Sinclair 1989, 235; Comfort 2009, 289.

248 <http://www.hasankeyfkazıları.org.tr/en/excavation-sites/roman-gate/>

249 Comfort 2009, 290.

250 <http://www.hasankeyfkazıları.org.tr/en/excavation-sites/shops-on-the-gateway-to-the-citadel/>

5.5 Summary and Conclusions

Our knowledge on the cultural landscape of Gordyene is largely limited, and one would definitely wish to know much more. At the same time, we cannot say that we do not know anything about Gordyene's culture. On the contrary, the extant evidence allows us to draw a few conclusions.

Gordyene appears to have originated as a cultural and political enclave of highly distinctive local character (before the end of the fifth century BCE). Before the beginning of the first century BCE, the Karduchoi expanded into the open Tigris Valley. In this context, it is important to note that ancient Gordyene straddled two important communication lines between Armenia and Mesopotamia, as well as between Mesopotamia and Adiabene: the Bitlis pass and the Tigris crossings, respectively. At this stage, Gordyene became exposed to two particular directions of cultural influences from Armenia in the north and Mesopotamia in the south. At the same time, it was also subject to common cultural influences in the Near East, including Greco-Hellenistic, Roman, and Iranian cultures.

The territory of Gordyene included both rural and urbanized areas. Ancient sources emphasize its natural resources and agricultural wealth. This is true for the occupation of the Gordyaeon Mountains, but became particularly evident when Gordyene took advantage of possibilities of the Upper Tigris valley. The archaeological record clearly indicates that the Hellenistic period was the time of greatest economic prosperity in the region. Concerning Gordyene's urbanized areas (e.g. Eski Hendek, Eski Finik, the Kazrik area, and Çattepe), its cities were strongly fortified and played an important strategic role. Their aim was to control vital lines of communication, especially mountain passes and river crossings (the Bitlis Pass and the Tigris crossings). This characteristic of Gordyene's cultural landscape is already attested in the Hellenistic period, but continued in the Parthian and Roman periods as well. It appears that the Roman influence in the region could particularly be felt in the military aspects of its material culture, such as the building of forts, bridges, and (possibly) roads. Likewise, both the Roman culture and the Greek-Hellenistic culture contributed to the development of Gordyene's economy, as can be seen in the findings of (first Hellenistic and then Roman) pottery and coinage in this area. Finally, the archaeological record includes several Parthian monumental rock-cut reliefs that were commissioned at important crossroads of routes. This cultural element clearly reflects a long Arsacid dominance over this territory.

Political History of Gordyene

6.1 Karduchoi in the Persian Empire

Xenophon makes a very remarkable statement about the political status of the Karduchoi (3.5.16):

They “dwelt up among the mountains, were a warlike people, and were not subjects of the King; in fact, a royal army of one hundred and twenty thousand men had once invaded them, and, by reason of the ruggedness of the country, not a man of all that number came back. Still, whenever they made a treaty with the satrap in the plain, some of the people of the plain did have dealings with the Karduchoi and some of the Karduchoi with them.”¹

The phrase “the satrap in the plain” (ὁ σατράπης ὁ ἐν τῇ πεδίῳ) must refer to the satrap of the Achaemenid province of Assyria.² As we can infer from Xenophon, the next ruler on the track of the “Ten Thousand” was Orontes I of Armenia (3.5.17; 4.3.4, as well as 2.4.8–9; 3.4.13). The land of the Karduchoi was therefore located between the satrapy of Assyria and the satrapy of Armenia. Yet, Xenophon’s statement has been taken literally by many scholars, who consequently describe the Karduchoi “as independent of Persian control (albeit while living in the very heart of the empire).”³

At the same time, some scholars see such statements (though conveyed in credible ancient sources) as simplifications. Namely, the Persian kingdom included many areas inhabited by mountainous tribes, which frequently controlled important mountain crossings, especially in the Zagros Mountains. Ancient sources recall several names of such peoples; for instance, Strabo, relying on Nearchos (*Geog.* 11.13.6), enumerates four predatory tribes of southwest

¹ Brownson 1922, 250–251.

² B. Jacobs 1994, 155–156.

³ Hewsen 2001, 30. Likewise Hewsen 1983, 131; Badian 1985, 486 (“semi-independence”), Syme 1995, 30; A. Sagona, C. Sagona 2004, 52 and many others.

Persia: the Mardians, the Uxians, the Elymaeans, and the Cossaeans, who were famous for receiving tribute from the Persian kings.⁴

The Mardians (Μάρδοι, *Mardi*) were neighbors of the Uxians and the Elymaeans (see below).⁵ They had the reputation of being a fierce, warlike, and aggressive people who subsided on banditry and goat breeding (Nik. Damask. FGrHist 90, Fr. 66.6,9).⁶ The Mardians are reported to have served in the Persian army on at least one occasion, during Xerxes I's attack on Greece (Aesch. *Pers.* 1.994).⁷ In turn, the Cossaeans (Κοσσαῖοι, *Cossaei*, *Cossiaei*, *Cossei*, *Cessei*) settled in the Zagros Mountains between Media (in the north) and Susiana (in the south), along the shortest route from Ecbatana (where the Persian kings used to spend the summer) to Babylonia.⁸ The Persian kings are reported to have travelled this route and to have presented gifts to the Cossaeans on their way (*Geog.* 11.13.6). Their land is described as barren and mountainous, and the Cossaeans are referred to as a powerful, predatory, audacious, and warlike mountain tribe, highly skilled in archery, occupied with continuous raiding, and uninterested in agriculture; (*Geog.* 11.13.6; 16.1.13,17–18; Diod. 17.59.3; 17.111.4; Arr. *Anab.* 7.15.1; 23.1).⁹ Their enlisting in the military service of the Persian king is referenced on the occasion of the battle of Gaugamela (Diod. 17.59.3; Curt. Ruf. 4.12.10).¹⁰ In turn, the Uxians (Οὔξιοι, *Oxii*) lived in the Zagros region above Susa and relied both on herding and on tolls leveled against those travelling on the route between Persia and Babylonia (Arr. *Anab.* 3.17.1–2; *Geog.* 15.3.4–6, 16.1.17).¹¹ The military service of the Uxians in the Persian army is referenced in the battle occurring near Gaugamela (Arr. *Anab.* 3.8.5; 3.11.5).¹² Finally, the Elymaeans settled in the western Zagros; their country is described mostly as

4 A useful summary can be found in Brunner 2006. Relevant references in Briant 2002 are of course most worthy of recommendation.

5 The problem with the location of the Mardians is that ancient sources give various and often contradictory locations of their homeland, ranging from the Caspian Mountains to the southern slopes of the Zagros Mountains. For the Mardians, see Weissbach 1930b and Gregoratti 2014.

6 See Briant 2002, 18; Gregoratti 2014, 77.

7 According to Herodotus 1.125, the Mardians also supported Cyrus against Medes. See also Briant 2002, 18; Gregoratti 2014, 77.

8 For the Cossaeans, see R. Schmitt 1993, who is followed here. See also Weissbach 1922 and Briant 2002, esp. 729–732.

9 R. Schmitt 1993, 333; Briant 2002, 729.

10 Briant 2002, 729.

11 Brunner 2006, 330. For the Uxians, see Treidler 1967a and Briant 2002, esp. 407, 469, 695–696, 728–732,

12 Briant 2002, 719.

a rugged country and their inhabitants as brigands who frequently raided the nearby Susians (*Geog.* 15.3.12, *Geog.* 16.1.17).¹³

Given all literary attestations and political realities, it appears that the relationship of the Persian court with various mountain peoples in the empire must have been more of a balance between autonomy and oversight.¹⁴ On the one hand, mountainous peoples enjoyed a great deal of autonomy and received occasional gifts from the Persian court; on the other hand, they acknowledged the authority of the Persian king by paying tributes and enlisting in military service.¹⁵

6.2 King Zarbienos

The first unambiguous reference to a king of Gordyene is made in ancient sources in the context of the reign of the Armenian king Tigranes II (the Great). More precisely, Zarbienos is mentioned by Plutarch on the occasion of the negotiations between the Romans (under Appius Clodius) and Tigranes II in Antioch (*Luc.* 21.1–2; 29.6–8).¹⁶

The negotiations between Appius Clodius and Tigranes II are said by Plutarch to take place in the 25th year of Tigranes II's reign. Given the fact that the beginning of Tigranes II's reign is safely dated to 95 BCE (due to the references in the Babylonian astronomical diaries¹⁷), Plutarch's references give us the date (of the winter in) 71/70 BCE.¹⁸ According to Plutarch, Appius Clodius reached Antioch before the arrival of Tigranes II (who was occupied with subduing some cities of Phoenicia) and was ordered to wait for Tigranes there. Appius Clodius took advantage of this time by winning over many the princes and cities subdued by Tigranes II. The princes and allies influenced by Appius remain anonymous with one exception: Zarbienos, the king of Gordyene. Plutarch's references to Zarbienos and the negotiations between Appius

13 Hansman 1998, 373; Briant 2002, 728–729.

14 Brunner 2006, 331: „In practice there must have occurred a process of mutual accommodation by the royal and tribal parties, with either side having its own perception of the ultimate status of the people concerned. Whatever status terms were used, they did not preclude the practice of giftgiving by either side.”

15 Wiesehöfer 2012 calls it Reziprozitätsverhältnis: “(Geschenke/Gegengeschenke; Anerkennung von Autonomie/Loyalität und Heeresfolge)”. Likewise Briant 2002, 730–731.

16 Apart from Plutarch, Zarbienos is also mentioned in passing in Cicero, *Ad. Att.* 2.4.2. See Frank 1937.

17 See Geller, Traina 2013.

18 Olbrycht 2009, 168.

Clodius and Tigranes II enable us to set at least one fixed date for the reign of Zarbienos: he was the king of Gordyene before the winter of 71/70 BCE.

Given the fact that the first king of Gordyene is attested only for ca. 71/70 BCE, the question arises as to when the kingdom of Gordyene arose and when it became part of the Parthian Empire. Unfortunately, there is no direct data to answer these questions. As for the emergence of the kingdom of Gordyene, there is a wide range of possibilities: from 165–164 BCE (Antiochos IV Epiphanes' visit to the Near East) through the unstable period of 140–122/121 BCE to the period of Parthian hegemony in Mesopotamia in 122/121 BCE–95 BCE. As far as the Parthian conquest of Gordyene is concerned, there are two likely moments: Gordyene was conquered either together with Adiabene by Mithradates I in ca. 145–141 BCE, or alone by Mithradates II (122–87 BCE), whose conquests included Greater Armenia and Mesopotamia as far as the Euphrates River.

Coming back to Zarbienos, we also learn about the consequences of Appius' conspiracy from Plutarch. Tigranes II was informed of Zarbienos' behavior, and put him to death (together with his wife and children), before the Romans entered Armenia. Plutarch's phrase about the Romans entering Gordyene indicates that Zarbienos was killed in a rapid succession of events, that is, between the winter 71/70 BCE and the summer of 69 BCE, most likely in early 70 BCE. Indeed, during the battle at Tigranokerta, we hear of a contingent of the Gordyaeans, but (unlike in the case of Adiabene) there is no reference to their ruler. It appears that Tigranes II did not appoint Zarbienos' successor, but ruled directly over Gordyene.

The question arises as to the fate of Gordyene after the end of the Third Mithridatic War. According to the testimony of Appian (*Mith.* 105), both Gordyene and Sophene were given to Ariobarzanes, king of Kappadokia. Appian's statement certainly includes several mistakes (see chapter 3.3), and as far as Gordyene is concerned, it appears that Gordyene is mistakenly mentioned in Appian's statement because of its geographical connection with Sophene (as its neighbor).¹⁹ Above all else, Appian's statement about Gordyene is contradicted by the testimony of Plutarch and Dio. That is to say, Plutarch (*Pomp.* 36.2) and Dio (Cass. Dio 38.5.4) agreeably tell us that Gordyene became the bone of contention between Tigranes II and Phraates III, king of Parthia. The Parthians invaded Gordyene, but the Romans (a Roman contingent under

19 Frankfort 1963, 186; Wheeler 2002, 101. More precisely, Wheeler 2002, 101 postulates that the mistake results from the association between Sophene's southern frontier extending as far as the Masion Mountains (occasionally called the Gordyaeen Mountains) and Gordyene itself.

Afranius sent on Pompey's orders in about 66 BCE) drove the Parthians out of Gordyene into Adiabene, and restored Tigranes II's suzerainty over Gordyene.

6.3 Gordyene and Adiabene

The overthrow of Zarbienos in 70 BCE left Gordyene without its own king. Gordyene was first under control of Tigranes II, and in 69 BCE it was occupied by the Roman legions (to the satisfaction of the local population). The end of Lucullus' mission in the East meant the withdrawal of Roman forces in the spring of 67 BCE, and left a military vacuum in Gordyene which became the bone of contention between Armenia and Parthia. The Parthians resorted to the use of force by invading Gordyene (in 67 or 66 BCE), but the immediate Roman reaction—the decision of Pompey the Great and its military execution by Roman legions under command of Pompey's general, Afranius—restored Gordyene to Armenia in 66 BCE.

After the overthrow of Zarbienos in 70 BCE, we do not hear of any other king of Gordyene in the context of Lucullus' and Pompey's campaigns, and its territory apparently became the subject of occupation and incorporation by its mighty neighbors, Armenia and Parthia. The next reference to Gordyene in ancient sources can be only found in Josephus' *Jewish Antiquities* in the context of the history of the Adiabene royal house.

According to Josephus, *Ant.* 20.24, Monobazos I, king of Adiabene presented his youngest son, Izates II with the district of Karrōn (Καρρῶν). The name Karrōn is not attested otherwise, but a convincing emendation has been suggested and widely accepted by scholars—Καρρῶν to Καρδῶν—the latter could in turn be easily identified as Gordyene (see also chapter 4.9).²⁰ The emendation is based on the assumption that the original was a Semitic name and the Aramaic daleth was confused with resh (קרדון > *קרדון), which accounts for a very common paleographical phenomenon.²¹ Except for the paleographical question, this corrected identification can be supported by two other observations. Josephus' Karrōn is ascribed by Josephus three features for which Gordyene was famous in ancient literature: excellent soil, production of *amomum*, and the presence of the alleged remain of Noah's Ark. In this light,

20 Bochart 1651, 22; Markwart 1903, 289–291, n. 4; Barish 1983, 69–70; Harrak 2001, 170–171.

21 This emendation is followed by Debevoise 1938, 165; Kahrstedt 1950, 66; Feldman 1965, 402, n. “b”; Kahle 1959, 270, n. 4; Marciak 2014a, 198.

the identification of the district under power of Izates II as Gordyene appears to be established beyond reasonable doubt.²²

How long did Gordyene remain under the power of kings of Adiabene? Unless another ruler of Gordyene is explicitly attested, the conclusions about the political affiliation of Gordyene may be drawn only on the basis of indirect references to the region in ancient sources.

- The successor of Izates II's on the throne of Adiabene was Monobazos II (attested until at least 70 CE), who occupied one of the most prominent places among Parthian nobles, as far as we can judge from the contemporary sources (see chapter 9.2.3.). In this light, it is extremely unlikely that Gordyene could emancipate from Adiabene.
- In Trajan's times we hear of the *Cardueni* and the Tigris crossing opposite the Gordyaeen Mountains, but nothing is known of a separate ruler of Gordyene. What is more, Mebarsapes, king of Adiabene, belonged to most prominent Parthian rulers in Upper Mesopotamia with holdings west of the Tigris (Singara).

6.4 Trajan and Gordyene

The main problem with the history of Trajan's Parthian War is that we do not possess one continuous narrative by any ancient author. Instead, we are dependent on a number of lacunas excerpts that are not easy to interpret as a whole.

As far as Gordyene is concerned, there are three possible references to Gordyene in all extant sources on Emperor Trajan's Parthian War: the reference to the *Cardueni*, the person of King Manisaros, and the mention of the Gordyaeen Mountains on the occasion of the Tigris crossing by Trajan.

22 From a strictly paleographical point of view, another emendation of Karrōn into Haran might be considered. And yet, Haran is located much more to the west than Gordyene, and the acquisition of Nisibis (some 230 km east of Haran by modern road) is mentioned by Josephus only at the time of Izates II and the Parthian King Artabanos II. What is more, Haran is located very close to Urfa, the main town of Osrhoene, which is not known to be conquered by Adiabene in the first century BCE. Above all, Haran has not been known for any of the three landmarks of Gordyene: agricultural fertility, amomum, and Noah's ark.

First, both Eutropius and Festus mention the *Cardueni* (together with *Marcomedi*) in the list of Trajan's military exploits. According to Eutropius, Trajan kept (*obtenuit*) the territories of the *Cardueni* and *Marcomedi*, while according to Festus, Trajan occupied (*occupavit*) the territories of the *Cardueni* and *Marcomedi*. The testimonies of both Eutropius and Festus confirm that the territory of Gordyene was conquered by Trajan. Furthermore, it may be pointed out that both authors use ethnonyms, but do not mention rulers of these peoples, although they speak about embassies of other royalties received by Trajan: the *Iberians*, *Sauromatae*, *Bosphorani*, *Arabs*, *Osrhoeni*, and *Colchi*. At the same time, a certain amount of caution is called for. For instance, Eutropius and Festus mention only the captures of Anthemousia and Mesene (as a city and a country), but we know from other sources that both entities has their rulers: Sporakes and Attambelos, respectively.

Second, following the narrative of Xiphilinus, during the invasion of Northern Mesopotamia Trajan faced a number of local rulers (some titled kings) and conquered several localities. Among rulers, Manisaros and Mannos are mentioned only by name (without the mention of their affiliations), but the location (affiliation) of the rule of several other rulers is given: Abgar of Edessa (Abgar VII), Mannos of Arabia, Sporakes of Anthemousia, Mebarsapes of Adiabene. Furthermore, one ethnonym—the Mardians, two cities—Nisibis and Batnae, and three other localities connected with Adiabene—Singara, Adenystrae, and (only possibly) Libana on the Tigris—are mentioned.

It has been suggested that Manisaros may have been king of Gordyene. This identification is based on the basis of the offer made by Manisaros to Trajan. The offer was about keeping the adjacent districts of Armenia and Mesopotamia, which either Trajan or Manisaros (depending on the interpretation) could keep unchallenged in return for alliance. It appears that the phrase about Armenia and Mesopotamia would best fit Gordyene being located between Armenia and Mesopotamia. However, the phrase is very general, and may in fact refer to many areas along the Upper Tigris. As we can see, the Upper Mesopotamia at the time of Trajan's conquests included many smaller or bigger geopolitical entities, and both Mannos and Manisaros could have their headquarters at any of these entities.

Third, the beginning of Trajan's final campaign against Parthia is fairly precisely located: Trajan crossed the Tigris opposite the Gordyaean Mountains. This location of course points to the land of Gordyene. At the same time, Dio/Xiphilinus makes an interesting remark: with the crossing the Tigris, the Romans "gained possession of the whole of Adiabene" (68.26.3–4). In this light, Gordyene appears to be part of the kingdom of Adiabene, and this observation

further reinforces the rejection of the identification of Manisaros as the king of Gordyene.

6.5 Gordyene and *Transtigritanae regiones*

The next time we hear of a ruler of Gordyene in ancient sources after Zarbienes (71/70 BCE) is only in the fourth century CE. First, a ruler of Gordyene named Iovinianus appears in Ammianus Marcellinus' narrative (18.6.20) in the context of Roman-Persian wars in the Upper Tigris region. Second, Armenian sources also know of anonymous local rulers in Gordyene (Korduk') both in the context of Armenia's domestic policy and international relations between Rome, Persia, and Artaxata.

The backdrop of Ammianus' report in 18.6.20 is connected with Ammianus' scouting mission, which took place on the eve of the Persian invasion in 359 CE and which reached the Roman fortress Amida.²³ Roman commanders wanted to know the route of the Persian invasion. The intelligence they had received was not clear-cut, so they sent Ammianus on a scouting mission to Corduena. In 18.6.20 we read that

... there was at that time in Corduene, which was subject to the Persian power, a satrap called Iovinianus on Roman soil, a youth who had secret sympathy with us for the reason that, having been detained in Syria as a hostage and allured by the charm of liberal studies, he felt a burning desire to return to our country. To him I was sent with a centurion of tried loyalty ...²⁴

Ammianus' account about Iovinianus can only be understood in the broader context of the Roman-Persian wars in the region. That is to say, in 298 CE the Romans gained control of several countries east of the Euphrates called by Ammianus *gentes Transtigritanae* (Amm. Mar. 18.9.2) or just *Transtigritani* (Amm. 22.7.10) or referred to as *regio*—Amm. Marc. (25.7.8., 25.7.9). Some of the countries gained by the Roman in 298 CE were officially ceded back to Persia in 363 CE. The status of these countries on the Roman side is alluded to by several ancient authors (Petros Patrikios, Ammianus Marcellinus, Festus, Zosimos, Prokopios, and later Byzantine legislation—*Cod. Iust.* 1.29.5. and *Cod. Theod.* 12.13. 6). However, it is important to point to several limitations of our

23 Matthews 1989, 42–44. Ammianus' text used here is that of Rolfe 1935.

24 Rolfe 1935, 446–447.

evidence. First, the earlier sources (Ammianus, Festus, Zosimos) are less specific since they in fact refer to the issue only briefly and mainly from the point of view of international relations. Second, more light is shed on the issue by the later sources (Prokopios and Byzantine legislations), but it refers only to the countries which remained within the Roman orbit after the 363 CE peace treaty, which is not the case with Gordyene. Thus, the most detailed description of the *Transtigritani* that comes from Prokopios does not apply directly to Gordyene, which in Prokopios' time was an integral part of the Sasanian Kingdom for almost two centuries. In this light, only a general conclusion is possible on the political status of Gordyene between 298 CE and (approximately) 359 CE.

Generally speaking (see chapter 3.5.), following the distinction made by Festus with regard to the 298 CE peace treaty, the Romans had *dicio* over the *Transtigritani*, including Gordyene. The idea of *dicio* (unlike that of *dominium*) involves a client's political status where the main aspects of the domestic sphere of conduct are left within the competence of local authority, and the main restrictions concern the foreign policy that may also include limited presence of foreign military units.

In particular, three details directly concerning Gordyene can be found in our sources. First, the main ruler of Gordyene is titled "the satrap," which is telling in two ways. This office clearly suggests Iranian cultural and political connotations. What is more, the very idea of Gordyene as a satrapy suggests a sort of subordinate political constellation where a satrap enjoys some amount of autonomy in his province, but, at the same time, is always subordinate to another higher authority, either the Roman Emperor or the Sasanian king of the kings. Second, we read in Amm. Marc. 18.6.20 that *Iovinianus* once lived in Roman Syria as a hostage. This statement should not be understood in a very negative way. It instead points to the common Roman imperial practice of bringing members of local elites from foreign countries to the Roman Empire as a means to ensure the loyalty of the countries, but also as a means to forge close ties between Rome and the local elites.²⁵ In this sense, the example of Iovinianus (who was said to have longed for return to the Roman Empire) shows that the Roman practice may have succeeded in cultural and political Romanization of the local elites in the Upper Tigris region in general and in Gordyene in particular. Third, given the fact that Iovinianus had lived in Roman Syria before he took power in Gordyene it is most likely that he

25 See Dąbrowa 1987, 63–71; Strothmann 2012, 83–102 (for the Roman-Parthian period), and A.D. Lee 1991, 366–374, esp. 371–372 (concerning the Sasanian period).

belonged to local hereditary elites.²⁶ It was namely customary for Rome to take foreign hostages from local hereditary dynasties, as only in this way could one have a long-term hold on the local elites. The case of Iovinianus suggests that the office in Gordyene in the fourth century CE belonged to a local dynasty that held its power hereditarily.

Local rulers of Gordyene in the fourth century CE are also referred to in two Armenian sources: the *Epic Histories* and Agat'angelos.

The *Epic Histories* make three datable references to anonymous rulers of Gordyene. First, BP 3.9 mentions the revolt of the ruler of Aġnik' (Arzanene) named Bakur against the king of Armenia, Khusro.²⁷ This episode is probably alluded to by Julian, *Orationes* 1.13B, who mentions sending Caesar Constantius II to the eastern frontier as a response to the unrest in the East. Constantius II was sent from Constantinople where in July of 335 CE the *tricennialia* (thirty anniversary) of the reign of his father Constantine I and his own wedding had been celebrated. This allows us to date the unrest in the East to 335 CE, and it is most likely to be identified with Bakur's revolt. Consequently, the Armenian ruler named Khusro must be Khusro III (died ca. 338 CE),²⁸ who succeeded to the throne of Armenia after Tiridates IV (who had died in 330 CE) and before Aršak II. According to BP 3.9, the revolt was directed against the Armenian king, Khusro III, and the leader of the revolt was supported by Persian troops. However, the revolt was quenched by a coalition of local rulers (Gordyene, Sophanene, Sophene, Asthianene) under the leadership of Prince Ĵon from Gordyene.

Second, BP 4.50 mentions a large number of Armenian rulers who, after 34 years of war between Armenian and Persia, decided to join the king of Persia, while some other Armenian rulers joined the king of the Greeks.²⁹ In the eyes of the author of the *Epic Histories*, all these rulers betrayed their lord, king of Armenia. One of the rulers joining Persia is an anonymous ruler of Gordyene (among others, rulers of Arzanene and Norširakan are recalled), while rulers of Sophanene and Anzitene are said to have joined the king of the Greeks. It is widely accepted that BP 4.50 refers to the partition of the *regiones Transstigritanae* between Rome and Persia in 363 CE.³⁰ It should, however, be stressed that the perspective of the Armenian *Epic Histories* is not confirmed by the Roman sources; even more, it appears to be contradictory. Namely, the

26 Mosig-Walburg 2009, 142.

27 Garsoïan 1989, 76–77.

28 Kettenhofen 1995, 171.

29 Garsoïan 1989, 167.

30 Garsoïan 1989, 299, n. 3; Preiser-Kapeller 2001, 40.

two key players in the region were Rome and Persia, which struggled for political and territorial gains, the *regiones Transtigritanae* became the bone of contention, and the scene of military hostilities between two mighty contenders, Rome and Persia. To see leaders of the *regiones Transtigritanae* as freely choosing their political affiliation towards Rome or Persia is simply incorrect.

Third, BP 5.9–10,17–20 paints the picture of the (brief) restoration of the Armenian kingdom under King Pap which was achieved through the military exploits of the Armenian *sparapet*, Mušel Mamikonean, who subjugated the rebelled regions: Gordyene (Korduk'), Arzanene (Ałjnik'), Sophanene (Great Cop'k'), Ingilene (Angel'tun), and Anzitene (Anjit').³¹ All these countries were again forced into submission and paying tribute to the Armenian crown. This episode can be only approximately dated through the reference to King Pap who reigned between ca. 367 and 374 CE. However, the context assumed by BP 5.9–10,17–20 is highly unlikely. King Pap was in fact a Roman nominee on the Armenian throne, and it is hardly imaginable to see the Armenians raiding the Roman part of the *regiones Transtigritanae* (that is Sophanene, Ingilene, and Anzitene) in particular. Furthermore, even if an Armenian and pro-Roman raid affected Gordyene, nothing is known of its incorporation into the Roman Empire or Armenia. To the contrary, later authors (Festus, Zosimos, Prokopios) writing retrospectively about the 363 CE peace treaty saw the loss of the territory east of the Nymphios (Batman) River to Persia as final until their own times.

Another important reference to the ruler of Gordyene, being of different character than those in the *Epic Histories*, can be found in Agat'angelos (Aa 873). In writing about the ceremony of the consecration of St. Gregory the Illuminator, Agat'angelos paints the picture of the Armenian national council of all princes with King Trdat (Tiridates IV) at its head. One of Armenian princes present is the ruler of Korduk', who is specifically titled "the second the borderguard from Assyria."³² This is a more significant title than just a "lord" ("tēr", the title used throughout the *Epic Histories*),³³ and it is interpreted as the office of one of the Armenian *vitaxata*, that is, as one of the Armenian provincial rulers in charge of "the Armenian border province."³⁴ Gregory the Illuminator's inauguration as the patriarch of Armenia has been traditionally dated to 301 CE, but the latest research has rightly corrected this date to 313 or 314 CE.³⁵

31 Garsoïan 1989, 201–202.

32 Thomson 1976, 407.

33 Garsoïan 1989, 475.

34 See Hewsén 1988–89; Garsoïan 1989, 475.

35 Kettenhofen 2000, 33.

All in all, it should be noted that the picture of Gordyene as an Armenian country in the fourth century CE—the more so as the Armenian border province—is not confirmed by non-Armenian sources, which actually paint the picture of international relations between Rome and Persia, which essentially contradicts the point of view based on the Armenian national historiography. Gordyene accounted for a small region that went under control of the Roman Empire in 298 CE, but was regained by the Sasanians before 359 CE. According to Ammianus, the Romans attempted some amount of Romanization of this area, but the Persian military success annihilated the Roman primary achievements.

6.6 Gordyene in the Sasanian Kingdom

Before 359 CE and officially from 363 CE, Gordyene returned to the Sasanian kingdom. The question arises as to what the status Gordyene had within the Sasanian kingdom after its reunification. The sources that allow us to reconstruct the structure of the Sasanian kingdom are mainly of epigraphic nature.³⁶ First of all, there are two important royal inscriptions from Naqsh-e Rostam (also known as *Res Gestae Divi Saporis*) and from Paikuli. Second, useful information can also be obtained from inscriptions on Sasanian administrative seals (from the fifth century on) and coins.³⁷ The problem is, however, that all these sources do not explicitly mention Gordyene. This omission probably results from the fact that Gordyene (e.g. compared to Adiabene) was a relatively small district subsumed by other larger administrative units.

At the same time, it is generally accepted that the ecclesiastical administration essentially (though not perfectly) followed the civic structure of the Sasanian kingdom. In this context, the situation is more fortunate because we possess Christian sources (including records of Church synods, letters and biographies) that mention the bishoprics of Beth Qardū (see chapter 5.3.2.).³⁸ With the assumption of a great deal of convergence between the civil and ecclesiastical administration, we can fairly precisely reconstruct the administrative position of Gordyene in the Sasanian kingdom.

36 A useful overview of the Sasanian administration, especially in its late stages, is offered by Morony 1982 who is essentially followed here. See also Lukonin 1983.

37 For Sasanian administrative seals, see the groundbreaking study of Gyselen 1989. Sasanian coins, especially their inscriptions indicating mint-marks and dates, may also be useful in this regard. For the Sasanian coins, see Paruck 1924.

38 The essential publications are Chabot 1902 and Fiey 1965.

Qardū was located in the province of Arbāyestān (Beth 'Arbāyē), which stretched from the Sasanian border with Byzantium in the west to the upper Tigris in the east, with the southern limit formed by the Sinjar Mountains.³⁹ The province with its capital at Nisibis included several districts: Nisibis, Beth Arzun, Beth Qardū, Beth Zabdai, Beth Moksāyē, Sinjar, and (in the very late Sasanian period), Balad. It appears that Beth Qardū, as in previous centuries, must have bordered on the Bohtan River with the district of Arzun. It is hardly possible to delimitate its southern border with Beth Zabdai, but the Sasanian (and early Muslim) sources are helpful in making clear that Beth Zabdai was located to the south of Beth Qardū. Last, and most importantly, in the east Beth Qardū bordered with the district of Beth Nūhadrā, which in turn belonged to the province of Nōdšīragān (Nōd-Ardaxšīragān = Adiabene). The border between the two districts fell on the Eastern Khabur River. In this context, it is important to note that the city Peroz-Shāpūr (to be identified with the modern village of Faysh Khabur), considered as one of the possible Tigris crossings, was located on the east bank of the Tigris just below its confluence with the Eastern Khabur. This location means that the city belonged to the district of Beth Nūhadrā.⁴⁰

Although references to civil offices in Qardū are not extant, we do possess a few references to offices in neighboring districts. A certain Shāmūnā is reported to have been the governor of the district (nāhiya) of Beth Zabdai for Khusro II (590–628 CE) in the time of Shabhīrshō' as the Nestorian metropolitan of Nisibis (596–604 CE). We also know of a Zoroastrian priest and religious judge, Ādhōrafrozgerd, in Arzun in 446 CE.⁴¹

All in all, in the Sasanian period after 363 CE, Gordyene was a relatively small district between the Bohtan and Eastern Khabur rivers. It should be stressed that the region belonged to the province of Arbāyestān (Beth 'Arbāyē), and consequently remained separate from the mighty province Nōdšīragān (Nōd-Ardaxšīragān = Adiabene), which was a new situation in comparison to Gordyene's status between the first century BCE and possibly the third century CE.

39 See Morony 1982, 6–10.

40 Although it has also been noted by Morony 1982, 14 that at some point in the Islamic period, the city came to be considered part of Beth Qardū. Namely, Al-Mas'ūdī (Murūj 1.122) says that the Eastern Khabur emptied into the Tigris between the towns of Basarin and Peroz-Shāpūr in the territory of Qardū and Bāzābdā in the province of al-Mawšil. Likewise, Yāqūt (3.931) says that Fīrūz-Sābūr, a large village with ruins was one of the nawāḥī of Qardū. Such a change of political-administrative status for a city located in the frontier area marked by the river is not surprising, as it is attested for other cities with the similar location in the region: Cephæe or Çattepe/Tilli.

41 Morony 1982, 9.

6.7 Summary and Conclusions

Gordyene originated as the land of the Karduchoi who lived in the mountains between the Bohtan and Tigris rivers before 401 BCE.

In the Hellenistic period (certainly before the beginning of the first century BCE), the Karduchoi expanded into the open Tigris valley.

The origin of the kingdom of Gordyene is not clear. The only king of Gordyene was Zarbienos, and his reign is attested for the late first century BCE (before 71/70 BCE). The question remains open as to whether he had any predecessors. If he did, the kingdom of Gordyene must have arisen at any time between 165–164 BCE and 95 BCE. In turn, it is most likely that Gordyene was conquered by the Parthians either during the reign of Mithradates I in ca. 145–141 BCE (together with Adiabene) or by Mithradates II (122–87 BCE) alone.

After the fall of the independent monarchy (71/70 BCE), Gordyene was controlled by Armenia. In the late first century BCE Gordyene came under the control by Adiabene until at least 115 CE. However, it appears that Adiabene's dominance over Gordyene may have lasted much longer, possibly until 298 CE.

Given the fact that Gordyene was most likely part of the kingdom of Adiabene until 298 CE, its separation from the Sasanians automatically meant the end of the influence of Adiabene on its western neighbor. In this light, it may be speculated that a short-term affiliation with Rome brought about the rise of importance of Gordyene and its local elites which became elevated by the Romans to the status of sole rulers in their home territory.

After 363 CE, Gordyene did not return to Adiabene, but became part of the newly organized province of Arbāyestān (Beth 'Arbāyē), which included the territory seized from Byzantium.

PART 3

Adiabene



Historical Geography of Adiabene

We can tentatively distinguish two kinds of sources that contain information relevant for the historical geography of Adiabene: first, ethnographical and geographical accounts, and second, historiographical narratives.¹ Of course, these categories can sometimes overlap. For instance, in Ammianus Marcellinus we can find one of the best-known ethnographical and geographical accounts on Adiabene (and identical to passages found in great ancient geographers such as Strabo or Pliny the Elder), but it is inserted in an overwhelmingly historiographical narrative.

7.1 Ethnographical and Geographical Accounts on Adiabene

When it comes to geographical and ethnographical accounts, we can in fact distinguish two groups of references. The first group includes brief references to Adiabene made in the context of descriptions of large geographical areas. In these cases, Adiabene is mentioned only in passing and always in relation to other geographical or geopolitical entities. Strabo and Pliny the Elder especially excel in such brief references (*Geog.* 11.4.8, 11.14.12, 16.1.1, 16.1.8, 16.1.18, Pliny the Elder, *HN* 5.66, 6.25, 6.28, 6.42). For instance, in *Geog.* 16.1.1 (the description of the country of the Assyrians), in *Geog.* 16.1.8 (the description of the country of the Babylonians), in *Geog.* 11.4.8 and *Geog.* 16.1.1 (the description of the borders of Armenia), Adiabene is mentioned as located on the fringes of the countries in question and, remarkably, always coupled with Kalachene. Kalachene clearly corresponds to the Assyrian *Kalaḥ* (*Kalḥu*), and so can securely be identified as the area around Nimrud.² This identification in turn shows that for Strabo the two geographical entities are distinct. To be stressed from our perspective, Adiabene thus does not include the area around Nimrud, the less so any area west of Nimrud, especially the Nineveh area or Gordyene.

¹ This chapter offers a fresh look at the historical geography of Adiabene, but the study of Marciak 2014a, 175–199 (a revised version of Marciak 2011) is still worthy of recommendation as possibly a more rudimental treatment of the subject. At the same time, the aim of the present study is to discuss the material not included in previous treatment, and so possibly fill remaining gaps.

² Weissbach 1919a, 1530; Kessler 1999a, 146.

Three ancient accounts that provide detailed descriptions of Adiabene's borders are Strabo *Geog.* 16.1.3–4 (and partly 16.1.19), Ammianus 23.6.20–22, and Ptolemy, *Geogr.* 6.1.2.

In *Geog.* 16.1.3–4 we have the following account:³

Now the city Ninos was wiped out immediately after the overthrow of the Syrians. It was much greater than Babylon, and was situated in the plain of Atouria. Atouria borders on the region of Arbela, with the Lykos River lying between them. Now Arbela, which lies opposite to Babylonia, belongs to that country; and in the country on the far side of the Lykos River lie the plains of Atouria, which surround Ninos. In Atouria is a village Gaugamela, where Dareios was conquered and lost his empire. Now this is a famous place, as is also its name, which, being interpreted, means 'Camel's House.' Dareios, the son of Hystaspes, so named it, having given it as an estate for the maintenance of the camel which helped most on the toilsome journey through the deserts of Scythia with the burdens containing sustenance and support for the king. However, the Macedonians, seeing that this was a cheap village, but that Arbela was a notable settlement (founded, as it is said, by Arbelos, the son of Athmoneos), announced that the battle and victory took place near Arbela and so transmitted their account to the historians. After Arbela and Mt. Nikatorion (a name applied to it by Alexander after his victory in the neighbourhood of Arbela), one comes to the Kapros River, which lies at the same distance from Arbela as the Lykos. The country is called Artakene. Near Arbela lies the city Demetrias; and then one comes to the fountain of naphtha, and to the fires, and to the temple of Anea, and to Sadrakai, and to the royal palace of Dareios the son of Hystaspes, and to Kyparisson, and to the crossing of the Kapros River, where, at last, one is close to Seleucia and Babylon.

In *Geog.* 16.1.3–4 Strabo literally refers to the region of Arbela, which he also calls Ἀρτακηνή. However, similarities with Strabo's text in *Geog.* 16.1.19 leave no doubt that both descriptions (*Geog.* 16.1.3–4 and *Geog.* 16.1.19) are parallel, and consequently the region of Arbela (*Geog.* 16.1.3–4) and Adiabene (the term employed in *Geog.* 16.1.19) are for Strabo synonyms. The fact is that Strabo also uses another name for the region in *Geog.* 16.1.3–4: Artakene. However,

3 The texts of Strabo are quoted from H.L. Jones 1928 and H.L. Jones 1930. The spelling of proper names are however sometimes modified. The edition of Radt 2005 was also consulted. For *Geog.* 16.1.3–4, see H.L. Jones 1930, 194–197.

this toponym has never been properly explained—as otherwise unattested, it is widely considered as a corruption, and consequently emendated into *Ἀρβηληνή (Arbelitis)⁴ or *Ἀρπαχηνή (Arrapachitis).⁵ Yet there are no convincing arguments to argue exclusively in favor of only one of these explanations.⁶ Consequently, it is hard to build any interpretation on the strength of such doubtful identification.

Strabo very clearly puts the northern frontier of the region of Arbela. It falls on the Lykos River (Λύκος) which separates Adiabene from the plain of Atouria. The southern limit of Adiabene is likewise marked by another river, the Kapros River (Κάπρος). However, three uncertainties make the interpretation of the southern border of Adiabene controversial. First, the Kapros River is twice mentioned by Strabo. It is first said to lie the same distance from Arbela as the Lykos River, which is true for the modern Little Zab. But Strabo also says that after crossing the Kapros River, one is close to Seleucia and Babylon, which is definitely truer for other rivers in the region, the Diyala and Adhaim rivers, than the Little Zab. Consequently, it has been suggested that the second reference to *Kapros* should be emendated to *Gorgos* (Γοργός), which would in turn suggest the river's identification with the Diyala (preferably, see *Geogr.* 6.1.6) or the Adhaim River.⁷ If so, the next question arises: Was Strabo's Adiabene located between the Lykos and the Gorgos rivers, and, in other words, between the Great Zab and the Diyala (or Adhaim) rivers? This interpretation is possible.⁸ However, it is also possible that Strabo's sentence about Artakene ends his description of the region of Arbela, and his enumeration of several remarkable places (from Demetrias to Kyparisson) refers to another region, located between the Kapros and Gorgos rivers. It appears that both options are equally possible.

At any rate, Strabo's description of Adiabene envisages a country located between two twin rivers (*Lykos* means *wolf*, and *Kapros* means *boar*, but in

4 Müller, Dübner 1853, 628; Coray 1814, 160, n. 3; H.L. Jones 1930, 197, n. 2: ("probably an error for Adiabên").

5 Herzfeld 1968, 226. For Arrapachitis in Assyrian sources, see Schrader 1878, 164; Fraenkel 1896, 1225; Unger 1932b, 154; Herzfeld 1968, 229.

6 It is also theoretically possible that the name Artakene was coined after the name of the region's otherwise unknown one-time governor, and as such does not need to be corrected. For instance, Kramer 1852, 285 leaves the current form. Remarkably, Dio's description of Septimius Severus campaigns against Adiabene contains another similar toponym, *Arche*, which is also usually suggested to be corrupted.

7 Herzfeld 1968, 226. See also M. Streck 1912, 1660.

8 This interpretation is tentatively followed by Marciak 2014a, 177–178.

ancient text both rivers are usually mentioned as a pair).⁹ This perception of Adiabene's borders also appears in a much later geographical account of and Ammianus Marcellinus. According to Ammianus (23.6.20–22):

Within this area is Adiabena, called Assyria in ancient times, but by long custom changed to this name because, lying between the navigable rivers Ona and Tigris it could never be approached by a ford; for we Greeks for transire say διαβαίνειν. At least, this is the opinion of the ancients. But I myself say that there are two perpetually flowing rivers to be found in these lands, the Diabas and Adiabab, which I myself have crossed, and over which there are bridges of boats; and therefore it is to be assumed that Adiabena was named from them, as from great rivers Egypt was named, according to Homer, as well as India, and the Euphratensis, before my time called Commagena; likewise from the Hiberus, Hiberia (now Hispania), and the province of Baetica from the noble river Baetis. In this Adiabena is the city of Ninus, which once possessed the rule over Persia, perpetuating the name of Ninus, once a most powerful king and the husband of Semiramis; also Ecbatana, Arbela, and Gaugamela, where Alexander, after various other battles, overthrew Darius in a hot contest.¹⁰

In his definition of the borders of Adiabene (*Adiabena*), Ammianus refers to the names of local rivers. He actually gives two definitions: one he considers to be transmitted by the older tradition and the other based on his own experience. In the first place, he mentions the Tigris River and another, the unattested Ona River. It has been convincingly argued that the current form Ona is a malformation resulting from the following process: *inter onam* < *inter oram* < *inter ab oram* < *inter aboram*.¹¹ That is to say, *ab* has been wrongly understood as the preposition doubling another preposition *inter*, and the change of *r* into *n* is a simple spelling error.¹² Thus, the original name was Abora, which can easily be recognized as the name of the Khabur River. As two rivers bear this name in Mesopotamia, it remains to decide whether the Western (Syrian) or the Eastern (Assyrian) Khabur is meant. The first possible identification would suggest the greatest possible extension of Adiabene (including Nisibis

9 For the Zab rivers, see Ruge 1919; Weissbach 1919b; Weissbach 1927a; Kessler 1999b; Kessler 1999c; Bosworth 2002.

10 Rolfe 1937, 360–361.

11 Fontaine 1977b, 71, n. 159.

12 Fontaine 1977b, 71, n. 159. This interpretation is accepted by den Boeft, Drijvers, den Hengst, Teitler 1998, 152.

like in Josephus and Pliny the Elder). The second identification would suggest Adiabene's expansion along the eastern bank of the Tigris past Nineveh until the doorsteps of Gordyene. In turn, the two names, Diabas and Adiabas, are clearly related forms, and the root underlying both names appears to be connected with the Aramaic root of the Greek name Adiabene—Ḥadyab. The Aramaic root of Ḥdyb is in turn connected with the word *ḏib*, meaning *wolf*.¹³ This etymology brings us back to the names used by Strabo, especially Lykos, meaning *wolf* in Greek. It can unambiguously identified with the modern Great Zab.¹⁴ In this light, Diabas and Adiabas can be identified as the modern Zab rivers.¹⁵

Although another great ancient geographer Ptolemy does not define Adiabene's borders with regard to local rivers, he enumerates smaller distinctive districts. In Ptolemy's view, Adiabene is located between Arrapachitis and Garamaioi, but he also adds that Kalachene is located above Adiabene, and Arbelitis above the Garamaioi (*Geogr.* 6.1.2).¹⁶ As we already know, Kalachene can be identified as the region around Nimrud, while the Garamaioi are most likely to equated with Garmekān (Beth Garmai), known from Sasanian and Syriac sources as the district between the Little Zab and the Diyala River with Karkā de Beth Selōk (modern Kirkuk) as its capital.¹⁷ In this light, Ptolemy's Adiabene (Arbelitis) is a district located between the Great and Little Zabs, as in Strabo and Ammianus.¹⁸

The idea of Adiabene as the country whose borders are clearly marked by two twin (partly homonymous) rivers, to be identified as the Zab rivers, is therefore well attested in the oldest and the youngest ethno-geographical

13 Lipiński 1999, 21–25, esp. 23; Bosworth 2002.

14 Weissbach 1927a; LSJ 1064–65; Kessler 1999c; Bosworth 2002.

15 Weissbach 1919b; Weissbach 1927a; Dillemann 1961, 141; Dillemann 1962, 305–308; de Jonge 1980, 205; Kessler 1999b; Kessler 1999c. The only problem with this identification is that Ammianus claims to have crossed the Diabas and Adiabas rivers. He could not do it during the campaign of Emperor Julian, as the route of the Romans did not go via Arbela, and it is not certain that Ammianus went so far south on his scouting mission from Gordyene. The only explanation offered so far to address these questions is that Ammianus must have crossed these rivers on another (unknown to us) occasion.

16 The edition of Stückelberger, Graßhoff 2006 is used here. Additionally, the edition of Humbach, Ziegler 1998 was also consulted.

17 Morony 1982, 14.

18 The location of Ptolemy's Arrapachitis is highly problematic, and probably wrong. The toponym Arrapha is well known from Assyrian sources where it refers to the area south of the Little Zab. In this light, one cannot place Arrapachitis north of Adiabene and see it as bordering directly on Armenia, as Ptolemy does.

accounts on Adiabene: Strabo (writing in the early first century CE, but probably based on the older fourth century BCE traditions) and Ammianus (writing in the second half of the fourth century CE). The idea corresponds well with Ptolemy's evidence from the early second century CE. At the same time, Pliny the Elder, another important ethno-geographical writer from the first century CE, reveals a much larger territorial notion of Adiabene. Namely, Pliny the Elder sees Adiabene (which he also calls Assyria) as part of Syria which he in turn understands as occupying much of the territory of the ancient Near East—from Judaea across Mesopotamia (the land between the Euphrates and Tigris rivers) to Babylonia (*HN* 5.13). In *HN* 6.42 Pliny the Elder goes on to give more details about Adiabene:¹⁹

... Adiabene, where the land of the Assyrians begins; the part of Adiabene nearest to Syria is Arbelitis, where Alexander conquered Darius. The Macedonians have given to the whole of Adiabene the name of Mygdonia, from its likeness to Mygdonia in Macedon. Its towns are Alexandria and Antioch, the native name for which is Nesebis; it is 750 miles from Artaxata. There was also once the town of Nineveh, which was on the Tigris facing west, and was formerly very famous.

Of course, Pliny the Elder knows of Arbelitis, that is, the region around Arbela, which corresponds to the territorial definitions of Adiabene in Strabo, Ptolemy, and Ammianus. At the same time, he mentions Nineveh as one of the cities located in Adiabene, which sets him apart from the ancient writers mentioned above. What is more, Pliny the Elder's view look goes even further west, as he also locates Nisibis (*Nesebis*) and its region in Adiabene. What is, then, the difference between Adiabene equated with Arbelitis and Adiabene that includes the Nineveh area and even reaches as far as Nisibis? It has been suggested that, next to the difference between the uses of geographical, administrative or political terms,²⁰ some differences in the sources may reflect of geopolitical changes in the region.²¹ Thus, it is warranted to take a look at historiographical accounts in the chronological order with the aim of determining the course of geopolitical developments in the region.

19 Rackham 1942, 272.

20 Likewise Hauser 2013a.

21 Marciak 2014a, 196–199.

7.2 Historiographical Passages on Adiabene

1. Plutarch's *Vitae Parallelae* mention Adiabene in the context of the Third Mithridatic War (74 or 73–63 BCE).²² Two references in Plutarch are most relevant. First, in describing the populations compelled by Tigranes II the Great to settle in Tigranokerta (before 69 BCE), Plutarch *Luc.* 26.1 enumerates (next to the Greeks and Kappadokians) the Adiabeni, the Assyrians, and the Gordyaeans. We have seen some sources (Pliny the Elder and Ammianus) equate Assyria and Adiabene, but in Plutarch the ethnic groups from these two countries are distinct. Although the geographical attribution of the Assyrians may vary (following the geographical attribution of the term Assyria), the first and most straightforward assumption is to point to the heartland of the old Assyrian Empire, that is, the area of Nineveh, Nimrud, and Ashur. Second, Plut. *Pomp.* 36 tells us about the Roman legions being sent to expel the Parthians occupying Gordyene in approximately 66 BCE. Namely, the Roman general Afranius managed to drive the Parthians away from Gordyene to as far as Arbelitis.²³ In this light, it is certain that Adiabene did not include the area west of the Khabur River (the traditional eastern border of Gordyene), and it is also very likely that Adiabene did not expand beyond Arbelitis (that is, north of the Lykos River), to include the Assyrian areas of Nineveh and Nimrud.²⁴

2. In relating the story of the Adiabene royalty in *Ant.* 20.17–96, Josephus (Flavius) mentions two episodes essential to the historical geography of Adiabene in the first century CE. First, he recalls that the king of Adiabene, Monobazos I, appointed his son Izates II to rule in the district of Gordyene (see chapter 6.3).²⁵ This episode has been dated to before approximately 30 CE.²⁶ Josephus' narrative does not necessarily suggest that Gordyene was a new acquisition. Furthermore, Izates II is said to have received from the Parthian king, Artabanos II, the district of Nisibis as a reward for his loyalty

22 For the dating, see McGing 1984. For the historical context, see Holmes 1923, 176–212; Magie 1950, 344–358; Kahrstedt 1950, 59–60; Sherwin-White 1984, 159–206; Olbrycht 2009, 163–190; Olbrycht 2011, 275–281.

23 The Greek preposition μέχρι should not be understood as including the territory of Arbelitis, which is mistakenly assumed by Hoover 2009.

24 Likewise Kahrstedt 1950, 60.

25 For the textual basis of this identification, see Bochart 1651, 22; Markwart 1903, 289–291; Kahle 1959, 270, n. 4; Feldman 1965, 402, n. “b”; n. 4; Barish 1983, 69–70; Harrak 2001, 170–171; Marciak 2014a, 198. See chapter 6.3.

26 Marciak 2014a, 240–241.

(at the cost of Armenia). This event belongs to the late reign of Artabanos II, that is, to between approximately 37 CE and 40/41 CE.²⁷

3. Another important witness to geopolitical developments in northern Mesopotamia is Tacitus, *Ann.* 12.13 which describes the campaign of a faction of Parthian magnates (politically supported by the Romans) whose aim was to install Meherdates on the Parthian throne instead of the current ruler Gotarzes II in 49–50 CE.²⁸ Tacitus' account presents an interesting itinerary: upon "crossing the Tigris, [the forces] struck through the country of the Adiabeni, ... in passing, they captured Nineveh, the time-honored capital of Assyria, together with a fortress, known to fame as the site on which the Persian Empire fell in the last battle between Darius and Alexander."²⁹ From Tacitus' itinerary and wording, it is clear the name Adiabene is applied to the territory east of the Tigris and northwest of the Lykos River including Nineveh.³⁰

4. A very important chapter in the history of Roman military campaigns in the East belongs to Emperor Trajan who undertook a major military campaign against the Parthian kingdom in 114–116 CE.³¹ Two aspects of Trajan's military maneuvers are particularly important for the historical geography of Adiabene. First, during his conquests in northern Mesopotamia, Trajan faced a number of allied minor rulers being vassals of the Parthian king: Abgar of Edessa (Abgar VII), Mannos of Arabia, Sporakes of Anthemousia, and Mebarsapes of Adiabene. This list also includes two other rulers whose location is not specified: Manisaros and Mannos.³² As for Adiabene, it should be stressed that its ruler Mebarsapes belonged to the most prominent rulers in northern Mesopotamia, he possibly took part in the battle near Nisibis, and definitely defended three places against the Romans: Singara, Adenystrae, and (possibly) Libana on the Tigris.³³ Although it is possible to claim that all these three locations were defended by Mebarsapes only as part of the joined effort

27 Marciak 2014a, 236–237.

28 For the historical context, see Ziegler 1964, 65–66; Schippmann 1980, 53; Bivar 1983, 77; Dąbrowa 1983, 121–124; Schottky 1991, 109; Hackl 2010a, 71.

29 The translation of Jackson 1937a, 333–334 is used here. For the controversial reading of the phrase "sedes Assyriae et (Arbela) castellum," see Marciak 2014a, 186, n. 94.

30 Furneaux 1907, 76; Marciak 2014a, 187.

31 Two essential publications are Guey 1937 and Lepper 1948. A very important contribution about Adiabene in the context of Trajan's *Parthian War* is Lightfoot 1990. See also U. Hartmann 2010. For short overviews, see Ziegler 1964, 100–104; Grousset 1947, 109–110; Magie 1950, 609–610, 1467–1468; Bivar 1983, 87–89.

32 Lepper 1948, 8–9.

33 Lepper 1948, 9.

of the coalition of Parthian minor rulers, it appears that the most straightforward interpretation is that the three locations were defended by Mebarsapes because they lay on the territory under power of the king of Adiabene. If so, we can see Adiabene as a political important player in the region which controlled some territory in the Mesopotamian plain west of the Tigris in 114–115 CE.

Another important detail concerns the beginning of Trajan's final campaign in 116 CE, which led to the capture of the Parthian capital, Ctesiphon. Dio's text is one of the most famous ancient sources mentioning Adiabene and therefore deserves quoting in full (Dio 68.26.1–4):

Trajan at the beginning of spring hastened into the enemy's country. And since the region near the Tigris is bare of timber suitable for building ships, he brought his boats, which had been constructed in the forests around Nisibis, to the river on waggons; for they had been built in such a way that they could be taken apart and put together again. He had great difficulty in bridging the stream opposite the Gordyaeen Mountains, as the barbarians had taken their stand on the opposite bank and tried to hinder him.... And the Romans crossed over and gained possession of the whole of Adiabene. This is a district of Assyria in the vicinity of Ninus; and Arbela and Gaugamela, near which places Alexander conquered Dareios, are also in this same country. Adiabene, accordingly, has also been called Aturia in the language of the barbarians, the double S being changed to T.³⁴

Dio's text conveys a clear itinerary of the Roman troops, which led through the territory of Adiabene including its famous landmarks on the eastern bank of the Tigris: the city of Nineveh, the village Gaugamela (in the vicinity of the battle plain where Alexander the Great finally defeated the Persian army), and the city of Arbela. Most striking is, however, the location of the Tigris crossing. It is not clearly defined, but one detail is given: it took place opposite the Gordyaeen Mountains which can securely be identified as the modern mountain range between Cizre and Siirt. Scholars have suggested a number of possible locations of the river crossing along the upper course of the Tigris between, roughly speaking, modern Damlarca and Mosul (Eski Finik, Cizre, Faysh Khabur, Nimrud),³⁵ and some of these crossings (Nineveh and Nimrud)

34 Cary 1925, 408–409.

35 See Dillemann 1962, 147–192 (esp. fig. XVIII); Jankowska 1991, 229–231; Kaegi 2003, 166; Reade 1998, 81; Comfort 2009, 79.

are not located in the territory of Gordyene (and it is not clear as to what extent the hills seen in distance from the Tigris banks could be labeled as the Gordyaeen Mountains). Yet, it appears that the most straightforward interpretation is that the crossing place in full view of the Gordyaeen Mountains should be located on the historical territory of Gordyene (Eski Finik, Cizre, Faysh Khabur),³⁶ which, in Dio's description of Trajan's maneuver, is subsumed under Adiabene. In this light, it follows that Mebarsapes' Adiabene controlled the territory of Gordyene.

5. Some information about the historical geography of Adiabene can also be gained from Dio's accounts on Septimius Severus' confrontation with Niger's eastern allies in 197 CE.³⁷ Namely, the *casus belli* for Septimius was the siege of Nisibis by the kings of Osrhoene and Adiabene and their unwillingness to surrender several other (anonymous) strongholds in the region. Severus' war with Niger's eastern allies included several campaigns that are only vaguely described by Cassius Dio. It is generally assumed that in 75.2.3 and 75.3.2 Dio describes two different Roman campaigns:³⁸ the first vague text is supposed to refer to military maneuvers on the territory on the western bank of the Tigris (due to the mention of Nisibis in the context), while the second is believed to describe an expedition against the heartland of Adiabene on the western bank (because of the suggested emendation of Arche into Arbelitis).³⁹ But it should be stressed that Dio's descriptions are extremely general and vague in its geography. At any rate, the connection of the king of Adiabene with Nisibis is very telling, as it shows that the ruler of Adiabene was an active political player on the western bank of the Tigris, and possibly possessed some pieces of territory in the Mesopotamian plain (like in the time of Emperor Trajan).

6. Important geopolitical changes in the region took place as a result of Roman-Persian wars in the late second and third centuries CE.⁴⁰ The decision of two peace treaties between Rome and Persia are especially important. In 298 CE several countries including Ingilene, Sophene, Arzanene, Gordyene and Zabdikene were ceded by Persia to Rome (Petros Patrikios, FGrHist IV, Fr. 14), while in 363 CE the Persians received back Arzanene, Moxoene, Zabdikene,

36 Likewise Syme 1995, 30–31.

37 For the historical context, see Magie 1950, 671–673, 1538–1542; Ziegler 1964, 129–132; Platnauer 1918b, 74–98; Birley 1988, 108–120.

38 Hasebroek 1921, 77; Fluss 1923, 1961; Magie 1950, 673.

39 von Gutschmid 1892, 151, n. 3 (Arbelitis); Hasebroek 1921, 77.

40 For the historical context, see Blockley 1984, 28–49; Winter 1988, 171–184; Winter 1989, 555–571; Dodgeon, Lieu 1991, 133–134; Greatrex, Lieu 2002, 1–13; Dignas, Winter 2007, 122–134; Mosig-Walburg 2009, 122–155 and 305–34; Olbrycht 2010a, 229–233.

Gordyene, and the three cities-strongholds Nisibis, Singara, and Castra Maurorum (Amm. Mar. 25.7.9). It is evident that Adiabene is never mentioned in this context, but the geopolitical changes in the region had an indirect impact on Adiabene. Namely, the territory of Gordyene came under Roman control in 298 CE, although it likely belonged to Adiabene in the second century CE. What is more, after Gordyene returned to Persia in 363 CE, it was included in the Sasanian central administration as part of the province of Arbāyestān (Beth 'Arbāyē), and not of the province of Nōdšīragān (or Nōd-Ardaxšīragān).⁴¹ The border between the provinces on the eastern bank of the Tigris fell on the eastern Khabur River.⁴² Secondly, ever since the creation of the Roman province of Mesopotamia, Adiabene's influence in the Mesopotamian plain west of the Tigris must have been reduced. For instance, although in 115 CE Singara was likely under power of the king of Adiabene, it became part of the Roman province beginning with Septimius Severus.

7. Another important military episode in Mesopotamia which sheds more light on the historical geography of Adiabene is a joint Arab-Roman campaign in 541 CE that accounted for just one of many episodes in the larger Roman-Sasanian war in 541–562 CE ("the Lazic War").⁴³ Its itinerary is very briefly presented by Prokopios (*Hist.* 2.19.15–18) in which the army was sent from Nisibis, crossed the Tigris, and entered Assyria. Assyria beyond the Tigris must refer to the eastern bank of the Tigris, but it is unclear as to how far south the raid extended.⁴⁴ The objective of only 1200 soldiers sent for the mission appears to be pillage and acquisition of basic intelligence about the enemy. The area the Romans operated in gives the impression of a densely populated countryside suitable for plunder, and no major strongholds are reported.⁴⁵ In this light, it seems likely that the army did not cross the Great Zab. Two elements in the itinerary presented by Prokopios reminds us of Trajan's campaigns, the Tigris crossing east of the Nisibis and the name of Assyria (or Adiabene) given to the stretch of the land on the eastern bank of the Tigris before its junction with the Great Zab.

8. The importance of the territory of Adiabene as a transit area is also reflected in other sources. It was Herodotus and *Alexander historians* (who, for obvious chronological reasons, did not call this area Adiabene) whose accounts already spoke of an important route leading through this area. Namely,

41 Morony 1982, 6–10.

42 Morony 1982, 14.

43 For the historical context, see Shahīd 1995, 209–218 and Greatrex, Lieu 2002, 108.

44 Walker 2006, 145.

45 Walker 2006, 145.

the route described by Herodotus (Herod. *Hist.* 5.52) requires the crossing of four rivers: the Tigris, “rivers of the same name” (which can securely be identified as the Zab rivers) and the Gyndes (Diyala)—before entering Media (that is Herodotus’ “land of the Matieni”).⁴⁶ This route was also taken by Alexander the Great in 331 BCE. That is, we know that the Greeks crossed the Tigris opposite the Gordyaeen Mountains (Arr. *Anab.* 3.7.7), fought the battle near Gaugamela, and crossed the Great Zab, passed by Arbela and made their way to Babylon. Dareios III, however, followed the same route on his escape after the battle at Gaugamela, but instead of going southwards to Babylon, turned eastwards to Ecbatana (Diod. 17.64.1–3).⁴⁷ Thus, Dareios III must also have crossed both Zabs, transferred the Kirkuk region and then branched off the direct route to Babylon somewhere in the Sulaimāniya province: more precisely, in the Šahrzūr plain.⁴⁸ Both Neo-Assyrian itineraries and the available topographical research indicate that the Šahrzūr plain was an important transit region between Northern Mesopotamia and Iran.⁴⁹

The Roman itineraries also locate important communication lines in this region. Namely, the route used by Alexander the Great and Trajan (according to Cass. Dio 68.26.1–4), as well as that described by Herodotus, match at least some parts of the route from Tomisa (via Nisibis and the *Ad flumen Tigrim* crossing) to Belnar (Arbela) in the *Peutinger Table*.⁵⁰ What is more, speaking about the presence of Adiabene on the west bank, another important station on the *Peutinger Table* for routes coming from the west is Singara from where the route continued via Hatra to Ctesiphon.⁵¹ In addition to this, Adiabene may also have had an indirect impact on this communication line by controlling routes that joined the Nisibis-Hatra connection from other directions: in particular, a route from Nineveh or Nimrud to Hatra and another from Ashur to Hatra.⁵²

9. Another aspect of the significance of the route leading from the Tigris crossings (in Gordyene) via the Nineveh area and the Great Zab crossings to Arbela is illuminated by two Byzantine campaigns against Persia in 590 CE and

46 Altaweel, Marsh, Mühl 2010, 15.

47 Reade 1999, 287, fig. 5; Altaweel, Marsh, Mühl 2010, 15.

48 Altaweel, Marsh, Mühl 2010, 14. See also Kettenhofen 1995, 5.

49 Altaweel, Marsh, Mühl 2010, 14. See also Kettenhofen 1995, 5.

50 Comfort 2009, 106.

51 Dillemann 1962, 147, 176–177; Comfort 2009, 141–142.

52 See Altaweel, Hauser 2004, 63–70, 77–80; Reade 1999, 287, fig. 5.

627 CE.⁵³ The political objective of a joint Roman-Persian army in 590 CE was to regain the Persian throne for Khusro II.⁵⁴ Our main source, Theophylact Simocatta, provides a confused account of the progress of the Roman-Persian army through Adiabene.⁵⁵ However, the basic points of its itinerary are as follows: the army first crossed the Tigris and then the Great Zab, captured Arbela, and reached as far as the Little Zab, at which point they decided to dramatically change the direction of their march and went backwards towards the Keli-Shin pass in the Zagros with the aim of joining the Roman contingent in Armenia.⁵⁶ Thus, in addition to the route from Nisibis to Arbela, the Roman-Persian war in 590 CE shows the importance of Adiabene as a transit area for a route branching off to Media via the Keli-Shin pass in the Zagros Mountains. This same pass was also used by the Romans in 627 CE.⁵⁷ This time, the Romans under Emperor Heraclius took on a completely different itinerary:⁵⁸ from Armenia along the western shore of Lake Urmia across the Zagros Mountains (using the Keli-Shin pass) into Adiabene. However, having reached Arbelitis, Heraclius surprisingly turned northwest and crossed the Great Zab and went in the direction of the Tigris crossings towards Nisibis. Having won a critical victory on the plain of Nineveh, Heraclius again moved back into the heartland of the Sasanian kingdom using the old Royal road (mentioned by Herodotus; used by Alexander the Great, Trajan, and partly Khusro II). He thus crossed the Tigris and moved via Arbela and Kirkuk to the vicinity of Ctesiphon.

7.3 Summary and Conclusions

It appears that Adiabene originated as the country located between the Zab rivers (*Geog.* 16.1.3–4; *Amm.* 23.6.20–22). Its main city was Arbela; consequently, the heartland of Adiabene can also be called Arbelitis (*Geogr.* 6.1.2., Pliny the Elder *HN* 6.42).

53 A short overview is offered by Walker 2006, 144–147.

54 For the historical context, see Whitby 1988, 297–308; Greatrex, Lieu 2002, 172–174.

55 For a detailed reconstruction of the whole route, see Whitby 1988, 297–308.

56 Whitby 1988, 300–303; Walker 2006, 145–146.

57 For the historical context, see Howard-Johnston 1999a, 23–29; Greatrex, Lieu 2002, 205–228; Kaegi 2003, 159–191.

58 For the route, see Howard-Johnston 1999a, 25–26; Kaegi 2003, 159–160.

With time, Adiabene as a geopolitical entity expanded its borders. Several directions of this expansion can be distinguished: the Nineveh region known as Atouria/Assyria, Gordyene, and the Mesopotamian plain as far as Nisibis.

Some of Adiabene's acquisitions were more permanent than others. The acquisition of the heartland of the old kingdom of Assyria most likely contributed to the association between Adiabene and Assyria in ancient sources (Pliny the Elder *HN* 5.66, 6.42; Cass. Dio 68.26.1–4; Amm. 23.6.20–22). However, this influence was bilateral. The region of Nineveh was also presented to as belonging to Adiabene (Tac. *Ann.* 12.13; Pliny the Elder, *HN* 6.42; Cass. Dio 68.26.1–4; Amm. Marc. 18.7.1, 23.6.20–22), and Nineveh referred to as one of the main cities of the kingdom of Adiabene (Pliny the Elder *HN* 6.42; Cass. Dio 68.26.1–4; Amm. Marc. 18.7.1, 23.6.20–22).

Gordyene appears to be a long-term acquisition of Adiabene (*Ant.* 20.24, Cass. Dio 68.26.1–4), and only the secession of considerable territories in the Upper Tigris region by Persia to Rome between 298 and 363 CE probably led to the separation of Gordyene from Adiabene. In turn, Adiabene's influence on Mesopotamia was most susceptible to changing political circumstances. In this area, Adiabene faced many other geopolitical entities, with Osrhoene, Hatra, various Arab tribes, and (foremost) Rome. It appears that the climax of Adiabene's influence in this area took place in the first and second centuries CE (Pliny the Elder *HN* 6.42; *Ant.* 20.66–67; references to Singara, Adenystrae, and (possibly) Libana during Trajan's maneuvers in Mesopotamia), but the Roman interest in this area (beginning with the creation of the province of Mesopotamia by Septimius Severus) must have greatly limited this sphere of expansion.

Adiabene's eastern neighbor was Media. The regions were clearly separated by the Zagros Mountains. By contrast, Adiabene's southern extension is problematic. Did Adiabene include the area south of the Little Zab? This interpretation is possible if certain interpretive decisions are made with regard to the two main ethnographical and geographical accounts on Adiabene, Strabo 16.1.3–4 and Amm. 23.6.20–22. First, if Strabo's second reference to the Kapros in 16.1.3–4 is to be emendated to the Gorgos, and Strabo's entire description in 16.1.3–4 is understood as referring to one region, then Adiabene also included the area between the modern Little Zab and Diyala rivers. Second, if the Diabas and Adiabas rivers mentioned by Ammianus Amm. 23.6.20–22 are to be identified as the rivers really crossed by Ammianus during the campaign of the Emperor Julian, then only the Diyala and Adhaim rivers come into play. The interpretation of the two texts mentioned above is, however, uncertain. The other later evidence, concerning the Sasanian state administration and the ecclesiastical Nestorian administration, is not conclusive either (see chapter 9.8.).

At the same time, it appears to be reasonable to think that the kingdom of Adiabene, in the time of its considerable political significance in the region, could expand to the south, as it certainly did in other well-attested direction (northwest along the east bank of the Tigris and westwards in the Mesopotamian plain). Perhaps it may be speculated after all that Ammianus' testimony reflects both the traditional location of Adiabene, as well as some more recent geopolitical developments. That is, Ammianus was aware of the location of Adiabene in the north (this is the older tradition, which he himself quotes), but the geopolitical reality in approximately 363 CE (Adiabene's control of the area south of the Little Zab) made Ammianus wrongly identify the Diyala and Adhaim rivers (which he indeed crossed) as the traditional 'wolf' rivers marking the borders of Adiabene.

Adiabene owed much of its strategic importance to its position on the crossroads of important communication lines—especially the old Achaemenid royal road from the Tigris crossings east of Nisibis to Arbela, but also the presence of the Zagros Mountain passes leading to Media—especially the Keli-Shin pass, but also the Šahrzūr plain further in the south.

Cultural Landscape of Adiabene¹

8.1 Literary Sources

8.1.1 *Strabo*

In *Geog.* 11.4.8 and 11.14.12 Strabo relates what became known among scholars as a *Siedlungslegende* for Armenia, and Adiabene also appears in this context.² Namely, Strabo's *Siedlungslegende* comes to the fore in the context of the literary tradition about the Argonautic expedition (*Geog.* 11.4.8; *Geog.* 11.14.12; as well as *Geog.* 16.1.24–25; *Geog.* 16.2.5); that is, a story about the heroic exploits of Jason and his companions (the Argonauts), who went to Kolchis to retrieve the Golden Fleece. According to Strabo, some of Jason's companions finally settled in foreign lands: Armenos in Armenia, and as a result "Armenia was named after him", and "of the followers of Armenos, some took up their abode in Akilisene, ... whereas others took up their abode in Syspiritis, as far as Kalachene and Adiabene, outside the Armenian mountains."³ The purpose of this tradition appears to be twofold.⁴ First, it is a typically ancient mythic story which seeks to explain the country's origin by pointing to its famous ancestor-eponym (who gave his name to the country).⁵ In this case, Adiabene was founded by a Greek who took part in the Argonautic expedition. This is of course very significant as it suggests that Adiabene was Hellenic in origin. Secondly, this text also conveys a certain political agenda—since Adiabene's eponym remains anonymous and is simply presented (and subsumed) as "Armenos' follower", and the origin of Adiabene is treated in *Geog.* 11.14.2 under the heading of an ancient story (ἀρχαιολογία) of the Armenian race (ἔθνος).⁶ It follows that this tradition is written from the Armenian perspective and potentially expresses Armenia's territorial rights to Adiabene, among other countries

1 This chapter is a revised and expanded version of Marciak 2014c.

2 The term was coined by Kahrstedt 1950, 59, n. 7 who actually speaks about *Geog.* 11.4.8 and 11.14.12 as "Siedlungslegende ... für Adiabene". Kahrstedt's interpretation is correct (followed by others, including Marciak 2014a, 176) provided that the preposition ἔως can be understood in an inclusive way (including Kalachene and Adiabene).

3 H.L. Jones 1928, 332–333.

4 See also Marciak 2014b, 17.

5 For similar stories about the foundation of Rome and the origin of Hellenistic Judaism, see Gruen 1998, 254–260; Hard 2004, 584–588; Mason 2007, 484, 490–491.

6 Likewise Wheeler 2002, 93–94 and Marciak 2014b, 17–18.

in the region.⁷ In this light, Adiabene appears to be part of the pan-Armenian heritage.⁸

Something that also belongs to this context is Strabo's brief remark in *Geog.* 16.1.3–4 that Arbela was founded by Arbelos, son of Athmonon. As S. Radt recognized, the name Athmonon appears to be a hint at the Attic Demos Athmonon.⁹ This connection is very significant as it aims to link the origin of Arbela with Athens, the cultural capital of the Greek world, and one cannot possibly claim a more prestigious Hellenic origin for an Oriental city.¹⁰ As in the case of the Argonauts, these stories are not believed to reflect historical facts. Nevertheless, they still speak volumes about cultural interactions. Interpretations of the Mesopotamian cultural environment in Greek terms (“interpretatio graeca”¹¹) are supposed to derive from Greek travelers, newcomers or inhabitants in the first place.¹² Thus, the very existence of such legends implies that the Greeks had contact with and knowledge about these lands, perhaps even the Greek settlement in the region.¹³ It is also theoretically possible that these traditions (note that Strabo introduces them with ὡς φασιν) could have been formulated by local elites, but even then it shows that these were intellectual elites of a considerably high cultural profile marked by interest and knowledge of Greek high culture.¹⁴ What is more, it is unlikely that such Pan-Hellenic stories would have been made up without anything “on the ground” to enforce their credibility in the eyes of the Greeks. Thus, either way, Strabo's references to Adiabene in the Greek context (the Argonauts in *Geog.* 11.4.8 and *Geog.* 11.14.12, Arbelos in *Geog.* 16.1.3–4) suggests a great deal of Greek cultural influence in Hellenistic-Parthian Adiabene.

This observation is to some extent confirmed in another detail in Strabo's text. According to *Geog.* 16.1.4, “near Arbela lies the city Demetrias”.¹⁵ This city has a very telling name—it is coined after a Greek name, Δημήτριος, and in

7 Marciak 2014b, 17–18.

8 Likewise Sellwood 1985, 457 (who however refers to Pliny the Elder's texts) and Marciak 2014a, 176.

9 Radt 2009, 255, n. 31.

10 Marciak 2014a, 179.

11 See Tcherikover 1961, 20–36, esp. 24; Hengel 1973, 23–27 and 464–486; Hengel 1976, 73–93.

12 Marciak 2014a, 179.

13 Marciak 2014a, 179.

14 Marciak 2014a, 179.

15 The reference to Demetrias in *Geog.* 16.1.3–4 begins Strabo's enumeration of several landmarks. It should be noted that the identification of the southern border of Adiabene in Strabo is problematic. Therefore, the landmarks discussed here concern Adiabene provided that either Strabo's second reference to the Kapros river is not be emended into

the Hellenistic Near East this must have been a ruler after whose name the city got its name. We know of four rulers bearing the name Demetrios who were in possession of this area: Demetrios Poliorketes (during the campaign against Seleukos I in ca. 310 BCE) and three Seleucid kings: Demetrios I Soter (162–150 BCE), Demetrios II Nikator (145–141 and 129–125 BCE) and Demetrios III Philopator (96–88 BCE).¹⁶ Demetrios Poliorketes¹⁷ and Demetrios III Philopator can easily be excluded, as they did not hold this area for long; thus, Demetrias was a Seleucid foundation of around the mid-second century BCE (by either Demetrios I Soter or Demetrios II Nikator).¹⁸

Geog. 16.1.3–4 also testifies to the presence of another cultural element in Adiabene. Namely, near the city Demetrias Strabo locates a number of places of possibly Iranian character: *Sadrakai* (the royal palace of Dareios), the fountain of naphtha and the fires, *Kyparisson*, and finally the temple of Anea. The etymology of the name *Sadrakai* goes back to the Old-Persian **srāḍak*, and consequently this name simply translates as a *palace*.¹⁹ In turn, the presence of oil resources in Mesopotamia was one of the region's main landmarks for Greek travelers to the region (e.g. *Geog.* 16.1.24–25; Herod. *Hist.* 1.179), and corresponds well with the reality of today's Iraqi Kurdistan. In this sense, Strabo's reference could be understood as reflecting natural phenomena. At the same time, we know that fire rituals played a prominent role in Iranian cults.²⁰ Therefore, Strabo's reference²¹ to the fountain of naphtha and the fires could also correspond to Iranian sacred places.²² This option appears all the more likely as Strabo also mentions *Kyparisson* in their vicinity. *Kyparisson* stands for a plantation of cypress trees, and extant Zoroastrian legends suggest that cypresses were planted at fire temples.²³ Finally, Strabo recalls the temple of Anea (τὸ τῆς Ἀνέας ἱερὸν).²⁴ This divine name, as it stands, is not attested elsewhere, and

the Gorgos, *Geog.* 16.1.3–4 or, despite the emendation, Strabo's entire description concerns one entity—Adiabene (stretching from the Great Zab to the Diyala rivers).

16 Bellinger 1949, 54; Sullivan 1990, 98; Sherwin-White, Kuhrt 1993, 230; Wolski 1999, 121–123.

17 Suggested by de Jong 1997, 274.

18 Marciak 2014a, 178–179.

19 Wikander 1946, 77, n. 5; Radt 2005, 278–279.

20 See Boyce 1975, 454–465; de Jong 1997, 343–350.

21 Although both terms appear for the first time in the narrative, they have definite articles. According to Radt 2009, 256, n. 2, this results only from copyists' mistakes.

22 Wikander 1946, 78.

23 Wikander 1946, 78; de Jong 1997, 274–275.

24 H.L. Jones 1930, 196.

therefore scholars tend to emendate its name either to Ἀναίτιδος or to Ναναίας,²⁵ thinking that it should lead to different identifications—an Iranian Anāhitā²⁶ (see Ἀναίτις in *Geog.* 11.8.4 and *Geog.* 15.3.15) or Nanaia respectively (see Ἀῖνη in Polybios 10.27 and 2 Macc 1.13–15; Nanaia originated as a Babylonian and Elamite goddess but was later incorporated into the Zoroastrian pantheon²⁷). To conclude, the reading Ναναίας is more straightforward in linguistic terms, and consequently *Geog.* 16.1.3–4 may be taken as a witness to the cult of Nanaia in Adiabene.²⁸

8.1.2 *Tacitus*

Tac. *Ann.* 12.13 describes military maneuvers between two Parthian groups—one supporting Meherdates, a claimant to the Parthian throne (politically supported by Rome), and the other defending the current Parthian ruler, Gotarzes II. This text can be of great importance to our research on Adiabene's culture, since it contains a remarkable description of Gotarzes' religious practices. However, it is also problematic in some respects: the itinerary of the military campaign is not entirely clear (see Figure 1, 49–50). In short, Meherdates' troops are reported to have first crossed the Tigris from Armenia, then to have met Izates II, king of Adiabene, and finally to have taken Nineveh. Next, the maneuvers are said to have taken place near the Corma River (which had been used by Gotarzes II as a barrier before he gathered all his enforcements) and the Sanbulos mountain (where Gotarzes II conducted religious practices to win divine favor before the battle).

Two problems arise with regard to our text.²⁹ First, although most editions read that “in passing, however, they captured Nineveh, the time-honoured capital of Assyria, together with a fortress, known to fame as the site on which the Persian Empire fell in the last battle between Dareios and Alexander” (“sed capta in transitu urbs Ninos, vetustissima sedes Assyriae, et castellum insigne fama, quod postremo inter Darium atque Alexandrum proelio Persarum illic opes conciderant”) the *Agricola* manuscript adds the phrase *and Arbela* before

25 The following readings have been suggested: Radt 2005, 278–279 and Radt 2009, 256, n. 2: Ἀναίας; Kramer 1852, 285: Ἀνέας; Coray 1814, 338: Ἀναίτιδος; Müller, Dübner 1853, 628: Ἀνέας.

26 Biffi 2002, 136; Radt 2009, 256, n. 2.

27 De Jong 1997, 273–275. For Nanaia and Anāhitā, see Hoffmann 1880, 134–161; de Jong 1997, 268–284; Briant 2002, 253–254; Weber 2010, 156, 160–161.

28 De Jong 1997, 274–275.

29 For a detailed description of the textual problem and its implications, see Marciak 2014a, 186, n. 94.

the noun *fortress* (*castellum*).³⁰ If this emendation is accepted, the theater of war moves considerably south: the troops took first Nineveh and then Arbela. Secondly, the identification of the Corma River and the Sanbulos Mountain is again problematic and in fact connected with our decision as to whether Tacitus' text should be emendated. If we follow Tacitus' text without emendation, we need to identify Corma as one of the Great Zab's tributaries (Khazir or Gomel),³¹ but neither identification is satisfactory in linguistic or paleographic terms. If Meherdates' troops reached as far as Arbela and passed by it, then we have three major rivers in the region which could have been used by Gotarzes II: the Little Zab, Diyala or Adhaim. In this case, Corma could indeed be seen as a corruption of the Greek *Τορνᾶς* (the Latin *Torna* and the Akkadian *Turnat*) mentioned by Theophanes the Confessor, eighth-ninth century CE (*Chron. AM* 6118)³² and identified as the Diyala.³³

In turn, many scholars have attempted to connect Tacitus' Sanbulos with the well-known sanctuaries of Herakles in the Parthian Empire—either the cave complex at Karafto (in Kordestān Province, 20 km west of Takab) or that at Behistūn.³⁴ However, it is also possible that there is no connection between Tacitus' story and the places which are already archaeologically known to us—Gotarzes II offered his vows in a place which is (and will most likely remain) anonymous to us, and consequently there is no need to introduce yet another element into our fragmented puzzle of identifications.

Provided that Gotarzes' vows took place in the territory of Adiabene, we gain an invaluable insight into Adiabene's culture. As Tacitus himself said (*Ann.* 12.13.3):

Gotarzes ... was offering vows to the local deities; the chief cult being that of Hercules, who at fixed intervals warns his priests by dream to place beside his temple a number of horses equipped for hunting. These, after being furnished with quivers full of arrows, run loose in the forest glades, and only at night return, panting hard, and with quivers emptied. In a second nightly vision, the god points out the course he held through the forest, and all along it wild beasts are discovered strewing the ground.³⁵

30 The edition of Jackson 1937a, 333–334 is used here. See also Koestermann 1967, 230.

31 Weissbach 1920a, 2232; implicitly Reade 1998, 65–66.

32 I am indebted to Prof. J. Reade for this reference.

33 Sturm 1937, 1794.

34 See Au. Stein 1940, 324–346; Bernard 1980; von Gall 2010; de Jong 1997, 303–304.

35 The translation of Jackson 1937a, 333–334 is used here.

Tacitus' description is striking in cultural terms—it uses a Greco-Roman appellation (*Hercules*) for a cult which in fact has distinctive Iranian features: horsemanship and hunting were essential to the Parthian culture, the motif of the hunt was also widespread in Zoroastrian mythology,³⁶ while white horses had a sacred status in Zoroastrian traditions.³⁷ What is more, the Greek Herakles was frequently identified with the Iranian god of victory, Verethraghna, and this association fits the context of Tacitus' story very well, since Gotarzes II prays for the victory before the final battle.³⁸

8.1.3 *Cassius Dio*

An interesting episode concerning Adiabene's cultural affiliation can be found in Cass. Dio 79.1, who describes the Roman campaign of Emperor Caracalla against the Parthian king, Artabanos IV, in 216 CE.³⁹ According to Cass. Dio 79.1, the Romans managed to capture Arbela, where Caracalla opened the royal tombs of the Parthians (τὰ μνημεῖα τὰ βασιλικά τῶν Πάρθων), and scattered the bones around. This statement, taken literally, could suggest that Parthian “kings of kings” had their necropolis at Arbela,⁴⁰ and this is most likely what Dio in fact meant, since in another passage (79.26) he adds that the revenge for the plunder of the royal tombs was one of the major reasons for Artabanos IV's counterattack against Rome (217 CE). However, the existence of the royal tombs of Parthian suzerains in Arbela is not confirmed by any other sources, either literary or archaeological. What is more, it is highly unlikely in the light of common knowledge on the Parthian kingdom: Parthian kings had their royal residences elsewhere: at Parthaunisa, known also as Nisa, Hekatompylos, Ctesiphon, and Ecbatana,⁴¹ while Arbela was the capital of a Parthian *regnum minus*—Adiabene.⁴² Therefore, it appears that Dio's statements should be taken as an example of the Roman perspective: to the Romans Adiabene (particularly Arbela) was an integral part of the Parthian world, and consequently

36 De Jong 1997, 304.

37 Boyce 1982, 36; Boyce 2001, 82 and 89.

38 De Jong 1997, 304.

39 For the historical context, see Kettenhofen 1990, 790–792.

40 Possibly Sellwood 1985 who writes that Caracalla “attempted to ambush the last Arsacid, Artabanus IV, and, having failed, vented his spleen by scattering the bones of the Parthian's forebears entombed at Arbela.”

41 Olbrycht 2010a, 203; Hauser 2012, 1005–1007.

42 Sourdel 1978, 76–77; Hansman 1987, 277–278; Reade 2001, 198; Marciak 2014a, 198.

the label of the Parthian royalty could also be used for kings of Adiabene, who were in fact vassals of the Parthian king of kings.⁴³

8.1.4 *Josephus and the Jewish milieu*

Adiabene may have played a more or less important role on the international scene as a Parthian *regnum minus* involved in the confrontation of Rome with the Parthians and Sasanians, but this country certainly became famous in historiography through the conversion of some members of the Adiabene royalty to Judaism (*Ant.* 20.17–96). These were Queen Helena, wife of Monobazos I, king of Adiabene; Izates II and Monobazos II; as well as their sons and successors to the Adiabene throne. In fact, the question of the conversion of the Adiabene royal family is important on two levels. First, it concerns the presence of the Adiabeni in Judaea. Second, it raises the question of the settlement of Jews in Adiabene itself during the Hellenistic, Parthian, and Sasanian periods.

When it comes to Judaea, we know from Josephus that some Adiabeni settled in Jerusalem (*Ant.* 20.49–53, *Ant.* 20.71). According to Josephus, Queen Helena decided to go on pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Her arrival coincided with the appearance of a great famine in Jerusalem that can be dated to approximately 44–46 CE. Josephus' describes Helena's charitable help towards the suffering Jerusalemites: Helena bought grain from Egypt, as well as a shipment of dried figs from Cyprus. Josephus stresses that Helena's deed earned her a great respect among people in Jerusalem. Furthermore, according to Josephus, Izates II decided to send his five sons to Jerusalem with the purpose of learning the language and culture of the Jewish *ethnos*. Lastly, we know that some Adiabeni took part in the great Jewish revolt against in Rome. Several individuals from Adiabene are mentioned as most distinguished in the insurgents' ranks: Monobazos and Kenedaios (entitled as *συγγενεῖς* of King Monobazos II, which probably denotes members of the extended royal family in this context) during the Jewish assault on the Roman forces of procurator Cestius in 66 CE (*Bell.* 2.517–522); Chagiras, a non-royal individual from Adiabene who initiated a daring attack on the Roman siege machines and the Roman camp on the Mount of Olives (*Bell.* 5.474–489). Lastly, at the very end of the revolt in 70 CE, Josephus recalls the children of Izates II (sons and children), as well as members of the family and court of Izates II, who surrendered to the Romans. Titus decided to accept them as royal hostages (*Bell.* 6.356–357).

What is more, we also hear from Josephus that the royal Adiabeni erected four monumental structures in Jerusalem, including three palaces (*Bell.* 4.567, *Bell.* 5.252–253, *Bell.* 6.355) and a grand mausoleum (*Bell.* 5.55, *Bell.* 5.119, *Bell.*

43 Likewise Chaumont 1973, 215, n. 5; Hansman 1987, 278.

5.147; *Ant.* 20.96; Paus. 8.16.4–5; Eus. *HE* 2.12.3; Jer. *Epist.* 108). The mausoleum is most likely to be identified with the present-day structure known as *le Tombeau des Rois*,⁴⁴ while the archaeological search for remains of the palaces has not yielded any significant results yet.

As far as the presence of Jews in Adiabene is concerned, it should be stressed that no references to Jews in Adiabene can be found in ancient literature prior to Josephus, who probably composed his writings in the last quarter of the first century CE. Thus, the initial information about the Jews in Adiabene comes to us with Josephus' writings: *Antiquitates Judaicae* (*Ant.* 20.17–96) and *De Bello Iudaico* (*Bell.* 1.66; *Bell.* 2.388).

Ant. 20.17–96 mentions two Jews who were in close contact with Queen Helena and King Izates II: Ananias and Eleazar. Neither, however, seems to be permanently connected with Adiabene: Ananias, who Josephus calls ἔμπορος (*Ant.* 20.34), met Izates II in Charakene and moved to Adiabene only upon Izates II's personal invitation; in turn, Eleazar is said to have come from Galilee, and his visit to Izates II appears to have been a one-time occasion.⁴⁵

Before Izates II and Ananias moved from Charakene to Adiabene, Helena had already been instructed in Jewish customs by "some other Jew" in Adiabene itself (*Ant.* 20.33). Likewise, when Izates II was already reigning in Adiabene, he could see her mother enjoying the practice of Jewish customs (*Ant.* 20.38). Both references, though meager, imply some Jewish presence in Adiabene. Firstly, it is not very likely that a complete stranger advocating unknown foreign practices could have had access to the reigning queen; secondly, Helena needed a certain Jewish environment around her to practice Jewish customs.⁴⁶ This evidence does not allow us to precisely determine the size and character of the Jewish community in Adiabene; but, if any intuitive suggestion is allowed, one could think of at least a small community.

Very important clues about the presence of Jews in Adiabene come from Josephus' two brief references to Adiabene formulated in the context of the Great Revolt against Rome (66–73 CE). First, in *Bell.* 1.6 Josephus mentions that his Aramaic version of *De Bello Iudaico* was addressed to "the Parthians and (καί) the Babylonians with (τέ) the Arabs, and (καί) our kinsmen beyond the Euphrates with (τέ) the Adiabeni."⁴⁷ This sentence is indeed grammatically difficult: especially the relation between the Greek conjunctions καί and τέ is

44 Bieberstein, Blodhoern 1994, 153–157; Hachlili 2005, 121, 168–170; Küchler 2007, 985–995; Kloner, Zissu 2007, 231–234.

45 Marciak 2014a, 252.

46 Marciak 2014a, 254.

47 Marciak 2014a, 211.

not entirely clear.⁴⁸ However, the particle καί can be understood as conjunctive, and τέ as adjunctive, that is, “καί introduces something new under the same aspect yet as an external addition, whereas τέ marks it as having an inner connection with what precedes.”⁴⁹ If this interpretation is correct, the Adiabeni appear to have been a distinctive *Jewish* group among all other Jews east of the Euphrates. What is more, this text implies “a sizable number of interested readers”⁵⁰ in Adiabene, who are important enough for Josephus to care about their opinion by addressing his work to them. Secondly, another important statement about the Jews in Adiabene in Josephus’ writings is, this time, put into the mouth of King Agrippa II (*Bell.* 2.345–407). Namely, Agrippa II delivers his speech to the insurgents in Jerusalem, urging them to surrender.⁵¹ The main point Agrippa II makes is that the insurgents’ hopes for external help are baseless. In particular, Agrippa II discourages them from extending their hopes “as far as beyond the Euphrates” to “your kinsmen from Adiabene” (τοὺς ἐκ τῆς Ἀδιαβηνῆς ὁμοφύλους), since the Parthians would not allow them to rise against the Romans (*Bell.* 2.388). This text is a very important testimony to the presence of Jews in Adiabene in the second half of the first century CE (from 66 CE onwards). Although there were already some individuals from Adiabene who were fighting in Judaea in 66–70 CE and even belonged to the bravest warriors and most ardent supporters of the uprising,⁵² the insurgents still hoped for fraternal help from Adiabene, which would apparently have tipped the balance of the war in favor of the Jews. Such expectations must have been based on both the considerable numbers and the political influence of Jews from Adiabene, and it appears that it was the conversion of the royal dynasty which created a convenient environment for an already existing (even if not large) Jewish community in Adiabene and further allowed its growth in size.⁵³ In this sense, *Bell.* 1.66 and *Bell.* 2.388 in particular reflect a result of a lengthy process whose moderate beginnings could be seen in *Ant.* 20.33 (the conversion of Helena).

Remarkably, after Josephus a long silence begins among ancient sources concerning the Jews in Adiabene. There are no more sources which refer to the Jews as inhabitants of Adiabene until the Talmud and the *Chronicle of Arbela*.

48 Rajak 1984, 177; Goodblatt 2012, 270, n. 26.

49 Thayer 1979, 616.

50 Feldman 1992, 377.

51 See also Marciak 2014a, 262–263.

52 Farmer 1956, 72, n. 64; J.J. Price 1992, 173; Marciak 2014a, 255–264.

53 Marciak 2014a, 253.

The Babylonian Talmud mentions a few rabbis who were active in Adiabene. Jacob Hadyaba (*BT Baba Batra* 26b) appears as an interlocutor of Rabbi Chisda (a third-generation Amora who died around 308);⁵⁴ additionally, two Talmudic passages (*BT Mo'ed Qaṭan* 28a and *BT Niddah* 21b) mention an anonymous “pair” (אָנאָן) of rabbis from Ḥadyab expressing their halakhic opinions.⁵⁵ All these figures appear in the context of the late third century CE.⁵⁶ Intriguing is the person of Mār 'Uqba (*PT Soṭah* 4, 3 (4)), who is reported to have ruled the *halakha* in Arbela concerning a nursing mother;⁵⁷ the identity (and dating) of this scholar is very unclear—he could be either the famous Exilarch (a first-generation Amora from Babylonia) or a later member of the exilarchal family.⁵⁸

Talmudic evidence regarding Adiabene is strikingly scarce. Given the importance of the Adiabene royalty and the Jews from Adiabene in the first century CE, one might expect to see many references to what would be a blooming Jewish life in Adiabene in subsequent centuries. It seems that there are only two possible reasons for this peculiar situation. The lively development of Jewish life in Adiabene (reflected in Josephus) may perhaps have been stopped by dramatic events (like repression after a failed uprising, e.g. in the times of Emperor Trajan). Otherwise, we have no choice but to consider the witness of the Babylonian Talmud as unrepresentative. If so, the low number of references to the Jews from Adiabene in the Babylonian Talmud could perhaps result from the negative attitude of the Babylonian rabbis towards other Mesopotamian Jews, since in their own eyes the Babylonian Jews were the purest representatives of Jewish traditions,⁵⁹ and transmitting traditions concerning the conduct of regional rivals would have been kept to the minimum possible.

8.1.5 Syriac Sources

Three extant Syriac sources are particularly related to Adiabene, and as such may contribute to our knowledge about the cultural landscape in Adiabene

54 Oppenheimer 1983, 22.

55 Oppenheimer 1983, 22.

56 Goodblatt 2006, 84.

57 Altheim, Stiehl 1965, 69; Oppenheimer 1983, 38–39. Gottheil 1901, 191 infers from this reference that there may have been a Rabbinic school in Arbela, but this idea is found by Oppenheimer 1983, 40 to be “far-fetched”.

58 Oppenheimer 1983, 40.

59 Kalmin 2010, 77: “it is possible that the Babylonians tended to belittle and ignore the Adiabeneans, because of their hostility and sense of superiority to Jews living outside of the area they designated as ‘genealogically pure Babylonia’”.

from the fourth until the early seventh centuries AD. The sources are as follows: the *Acts of Persian Martyrs*, the *Synodicon*, and the *Legend of Mar Qardagh*.⁶⁰

60 The origin of Christianity in Adiabene is enlightened by the *Chronicle of Arbela*. However, the antiquity, authenticity, and reliability of this source are the subject of a controversial debate among scholars (to say the least). This dispute cannot be dealt with here, and I shall set it aside for others. For a general overview of the problem, see C. Jullien, F. Jullien 2001 and Mathews 2003. Important critical opinions have been voiced by Peeters 1925; Assfalg 1966; Fiey 1967; Fiey 1986; and Kettenhofen 1995b. Scholars who opt for the (at least partial) authenticity and historical credibility of the *Chronicle* include: Sachau 1915, 5–37; Harnack 1924, 683–693; Brock 1967; Kawerau 1985; Chaumont 1988, 31–33; Kawerau 1991; and Brock 1992, 23–25, among many others. The present author tends to side with the opinions of Peeters 1925 and Kettenhofen 1995b about the historical value of the *Chronicle's* contribution to, respectively, the ecclesiastical and political history of Adiabene. In case the dispute is one day resolved in favor of the *Chronicle*, it is safer to include here at least the basic message of this problematic source (a useful overview of the religious situation in Adiabene in light of the *Chronicle of Arbela* is offered by Zehnder 2012a, who is essentially followed here. See also other concise overviews by Sachau 1919, 14–20, 52–55, 72–79; Harnack 1924, 683–693; Chaumont 1988, 31–33; McDonough 2005, 70–71).

In short, the document envisages three main protagonist groups: the Christians, the Jews, and “pagans.” To begin with, the Jews appear only in the background of the narrative and never as active players. All we can say about them is that they lived in this region in large numbers (many scholars see the presence of the Jews in Adiabene as fertile ground for the expansion of Christianity; that is, the Christian converts are believed to have been recruited from among Jews in the first place; see Harnack 1924, 689; Fiey 1965, 41–43; Neusner 1966, 144–150; M. Stern 1976, 170–178; Chaumont 1988, 52–53; Moffett 1992, 128–129; Feldman 1992, 376–377; Segal 2005, 68–71; Walker 2006, 107). In turn, the Christians are the main focus group, and the narrative presents a steady growth of Christianity despite numerous waves of persecutions from pagans. The persecutions were more severe in the city of Arbela than in the countryside (where Christian preachers were successful among the local population). They reached their peak around the middle of the second century CE.

The *Chronicle of Arbela* uses various terms to refer to the adversaries of the Christians: “pagans” (*hnp*), “unbelievers” (*l'mhymn*), “priests” (*khn*), “worshippers of fire” (*dsgdyn hww lnwr*) and, most importantly, “magi” (*mgws*), who were most active in instigating and carrying out the persecutions. Generally speaking, many Iranian features (or at least popular perceptions of Zoroastrianism) appear in the descriptions of the religious practices of Christian adversaries: the cult of springs and watercourses, the great spring festival in the month of Iyyār (*šhr'bgmwd*), reverence for the Sun and the Fire, and the strong position of Zoroastrian priests and magi towards local rulers and the Parthian king. All in all, in the light of the *Chronicle of Arbela*, the area of Adiabene appears have to been penetrated by Iranian cults (before it started to be overtaken by Christianity). The *Chronicle* also suggests a considerable Jewish settlement in the area.

The *Acts of Persian Martyrs* is in fact a large and diverse corpus of martyr acts (Syr. taš'yātā) associated with the persecution of the Christians by the Sasanian state in the mid-fourth century CE in the context of the renewal of the Roman-Sasanian armed conflict under Constantius II and Shapur II (esp. 344 CE).⁶¹ Some of the earliest martyr acts (recorded during the late fourth and fifth centuries CE) are considered to be historically reliable in general (as built around a solid core of "Märtyrerkatalog"), and can be useful in a twofold sense for our purposes.⁶² First, they provide us with basic information both about persecuted Christians (names, ecclesiastical rank, place of origin, place of imprisonment, date and place of death, names of co-martyrs) and about their persecutors (names and official titles).⁶³ Second, they give us insight into some aspects of Zoroastrianism in the Sasanian kingdom.

When it comes to the onomastic data (see also chapter 8.4.3), the *Acts* from Adiabene (BHO 2; 12; 29; 138; 423; 426; 372; 500; 1157⁶⁴) record the execution of many Christians in Adiabene (including two successive bishops of Arbela): e.g. the bishop Abraham, the bishop Yōḥannān bar Mariam, the priest Jacob (Ya'qōb) from Tell Šalilā and his sister the nun Maria, the deacon Barḥadbešabbā, the layman Ḥānanyā, the priest Jacob (Ya'qōb) and the deacon Āzād.⁶⁵ Another important group of names includes "Christians by name (only)" (AMS 2.307.13, AMS 2.315.2), i.e., apostate Christians who are often presented as executors of the faithful Christians. For instance, the following names

Furthermore, the testimony of the *Chronicle of Arbela* may also be important to bear witness to the development of Christian church organization in Mesopotamia. Taking the form of a *liber pontificalis* of the metropolis of Arbela, it conveys a list of 20 bishops of Arbela from approximately 104 CE (Pēqīdā, the first bishop) to 544 CE (Ḥēnānā, the 20th bishop). What is more, in recalling the collapse of the Parthian state and the beginning of the reign of the Sasanians (in the year 224 CE), the *Chronicle* states that there were (more than) 20 bishoprics in the area (roughly speaking) between the Caspian Sea and the Persian Gulf, and gives precise names for 17 dioceses. Likewise, the document reports the creation of the office of the patriarch of Seleucia-Ctesiphon to oversee all Christian bishops within the Sasanian Empire.

61 Walker 2006, 116. For the translation, see Hoffmann 1880, Braun 1915, as well as excerpts by Brock 1978 and Brock, Harvey 1987.

62 See Wiessner 1967, 199–288, Brock 1968 (review of Wiessner 1967), and recently Walker 2006, 87–120 (especially 113–115 including a short overview of scholarship).

63 Wiessner 1967, 200–201, 257.

64 Wiessner 1967, 199. For a synopsis of the *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Orientalis* and *Acta Sanctorum Martyrum* references, see Braun 1915, xvii–xxi and Devos 1966. The website syri.ac hosted by the University of Oklahoma is also worthy of recommendation in this regard.

65 Wiessner 1967, 199, Walker 2006, 111, n. 102.

can be found in this group: Paul, Māhdād, and Ḥaggai.⁶⁶ Finally, the following names and official titles of Zoroastrian persecutors can also be found in the *Acts* from Adiabene, e.g. (see also chapter 8.4.3.): Ardashir, king of Adiabene [Ḥadyab], Narse(h)-Tām-Šābūr, Šābūr-Tām-Šābūr, Pērōz-Tām-Šābūr, Ādur-Farrah, *mōbed* of Adiabene [Ḥadyab], Ādur-Šā(ha)g, *mōbed* of Adiabene, and Kurkāšīd, *mōbed* of Adiabene [Ḥadyab].⁶⁷

When it comes to names born by Christians, almost all names are Syriac in origin and most go back to Northwest Semitic names well-known from the Bible (see chapter 8.4.3.). Although it has been suggested that the use of Biblical names may testify to the Jewish background of the name's bearers,⁶⁸ it should be noted that these names belonged to well-known Biblical figures and could consequently have been widely used by Christians regardless of their ethnic background. Indeed, some linguistic features of the onomasticon used by the martyrs of Adiabene indicate that their linguistic background was Semitic—more precisely, Syriac. First, in formal terms, Biblical names are given in Syriac form. Second, the Aramaic/Syriac element “bar” is commonly used before introducing the patronym and as part of their personal names; as such, this is indicative of the Semitic background of its users.

In turn, the names of Sasanian officials are exclusively Iranian, which strongly fits the dominance of such names among the Adiabene elite beginning in the first century BCE (see chapter 8.4.2.). What is more, the *Acts of Martyrs* also mention two Sasanian offices. First, we learn of the office of mauhpātā (Iranian *mōbed*, older—magupati, magbad), which, in this context, clearly refers to the chief priest of the region.⁶⁹ Second, within another group of martyr-based acts focused on events in the neighboring region of Beth Garmai,⁷⁰ we hear of the King of Adiabene several times (*malkā d-Ḥadyab*), but only twice is the name of the ruler specifically given as Ardashir.⁷¹ This name has strong parallels to the Sasanian inscription from Naqsh-e Rostam, known as the *Res Gestae Divi Saporis*, in which the King of Adiabene named Ardashir is presented as a vassal ruler as well as the first official in Shapur I's empire to be given the honor of making an offering. However, the Sasanian inscriptions at Naqsh-e Rostam were commissioned on behalf of King Shapur I (ca. 240–270 CE), and the *Acts*

66 Wiessner 1967, 210.

67 Wiessner 1967, 201, n. 4.

68 See Mathews 2003, who, in speaking about the names of the early bishops of “Arbela (Samson, Isaac, Abraham, Noah, etc.),” interprets them as “clearly Jewish names.”

69 See Boyce 2001, 65, 78, 97–98, 14, 119, 157; Kreyenbroek 2013, 19–50.

70 Wiessner 1967, 226.

71 Wiessner 1967, 206, n. 3, 231, n. 1.

of *Martyrs* refer to persecution under the rule Shapur II (specifically around 344 CE). Therefore, it is impossible that the *Acts* and the *Res Gestae* refer to the same figure. If the references from the *Acts* are to be trusted, then they testify to the existence of another King of Adiabene named Ardashir (consequently Ardashir II of Adiabene). According to the *Acts*, Ardashir II was the brother of King Shapur II.⁷² Thus, it has been argued that Ardashir II, the King of Adiabene known from the *Acts*, is the same person who later succeeded Shapur II on the Sasanian throne as Ardashir II.⁷³

Furthermore, the reason the Sasanian officials persecuted the Christians was the rejection of the Zoroastrian-Sasanian religious practices by the latter group. As a result, we get insight into the Zoroastrian-Sasanian world of religion. The *Acts of the Martyrs* mention several essential Zoroastrian customs: the worship of sun, fire and water, as well as of moon.⁷⁴ The *Acts* also testify to an important role played by magi in Zoroastrian cults.⁷⁵ Furthermore, the *Acts* mention two other remarkable customs: blood consumption, which is not attested otherwise as a Zoroastrian custom. So this detail can be accepted as historically credible only if it is interpreted as the consumption of meat of animals sacrificed in Zoroastrian rituals.⁷⁶ Of course, the demand of marriage is not specifically Zoroastrian either, but can be easily understood in a specific polemic context as either directed against Christian celibates⁷⁷ or demanding a characteristically Zoroastrian close-kin marriage rejected by Christianity.⁷⁸

Remarkably, although the *Acts* are focused on the animosity between Christians and Zoroastrianists, they also provide a very interesting hint at the continuity of one of the most traditional cults of Adiabene. Aitilāhā, one of the Christian martyrs, acted as the priest of Šarbel, the lady of Arbela (*alāhtā d-Arbēl*) before his conversion (AMS 4.133–137). The name of such a deity is not attested otherwise, and consequently it has been suggested that the name should be emended.⁷⁹ Indeed, it appears that the form Šarbel comes (through the loss of the initial ālap) from the name, Iššarbēl,⁸⁰ which

72 The “Martyrium of 40 Witnesses (from Kaškar)” (AMS II.333.15) where Ardashir is called the brother of the great king Shapur II. See Wiessner 1967, 206, n. 3.

73 Nöldeke 1879a, 69, n. 2; Peeters 1925, 264.

74 Wiessner 1967, 203. See also Brock 1978, 179 and nn. 1–3.

75 Wiessner 1967, 203, 212.

76 Wiessner 1967, 204–205, n. 7.

77 See Wiessner 1967, 204, n. 7 with further reading suggestions.

78 Walker 2006, 240.

79 For an exhaustive overview of the history of research, see Greisiger 2008.

80 Dalley 1995, 145, n. 28; Greisiger 2008, 135.

is attested in Hatra (inscriptions nos. 34.35.38).⁸¹ In turn, Iššarbēl is a name originating from Ištar-Arbēl (Ishtar of Arbela) through the assimilation of t and š and the haplography of “-ar.”⁸² As a result, AMS 4.133–137 testifies to the survival of the cult of Ishtar in Arbela in the mid-fourth century CE.

Next, another Syriac source that contains important information on the Late-Sasanian cultural landscape in Adiabene is a document known today as the *Synodicon*.⁸³ Compiled during the patriarchate of Timothy I (780–823 CE), it preserves the records of thirteen East-Syrian synods that took place between 410 and 775 CE.⁸⁴ Of special importance are synods at which the members of the Arbela metropolis took part, as they provide us with information about names of bishops and names of their dioceses. The following metropolitan bishops of Arbela are mentioned in the *Synodicon*: Daniel at the synod of Mar Isaac in 410 CE and the synod of Dadišōʿ in 424 CE,⁸⁵ Joseph and ʿAbūšṭā (through his secretary Sīdōrā) at the synod of Babai in 497 CE,⁸⁶ Hēnānā at the synod of Aba I in 544 CE,⁸⁷ Mešabbēḥa at the synod of Joseph in 554 CE,⁸⁸ Hēnānā at the synod of Ezekiel in 576 CE⁸⁹ and the synod of Išōʿyāḥb I (through his secretary Mar Aba) in 585 CE,⁹⁰ and Yōnadab at the synod of Gregory I in 605 CE.⁹¹ Another metropolitan who should be mentioned in this context is Išōʿyāḥb III, who is known to have been the bishop of Arbela before taking on the office of the Patriarch of the Church of the East in 649 CE.⁹²

As we can see, the names of ecclesiastical elites are either popular Biblical names (Daniel, Joseph) or, largely, Syriac names (see chapter 8.4.3). The latter is entirely the case for holders of offices at the lower level of ecclesiastical importance (the secretaries Sīdōrā and Mar Aba). However, it should be noted that the usefulness of onomastic data from Late-Sasanian times (from 499 CE on) can be very limited. Namely, “the East-Syrian church of this generation was

81 See Beyer 1998, 152. The alternative reading would be Aššurbēl (see Greisiger 2008, 134 for further literature), but this reading appears to be mostly rejected at this time.

82 By contrast, Dalley 1995, 144–145 appears to understand the form as a juxtaposition of Ištar and Bēl, as, e.g., Ištar “was also known as Bel at Hatra.”

83 For the edition and translation, see Chabot 1902, as well as Braun 1915.

84 Walker 2006, 88, n. 6.

85 Chabot 1902, 273–274, 285, 617.

86 Chabot 1902, 310, 311, 315, 317, 620.

87 Chabot 1902, 328, 344–345, 350.

88 Chabot 1902, 366.

89 Chabot 1902, 368.

90 Chabot 1902, 423.

91 Chabot 1902, 478, 625.

92 Chabot 1902, 480, n. 1, 615.

no longer the scattered and persecuted sect it had been during the reign of Shapur II (307–379 CE).⁹³ Among others, Christian clergy could move freely throughout the Sasanian kingdom, and consequently “a Christian born in the Persian Gulf region ... might end his career as a bishop, or abbot, in northern Iraq or western Iran.”⁹⁴ As a result, the names of the clergy holding ecclesiastical offices in Adiabene did not have to be representative for the region’s cultural or ethnic profile.

Concerning other dioceses in the metropolis of Arbela (see also chapter 8.4.3.), the following bishops and their dioceses are attested in the *Synodicon*:

- Isaac (the synod of Mar Isaac in 410 CE),⁹⁵ Salomon (the synod of Dadīšōʿ in 424 CE),⁹⁶ Samuel (the synod of Babai in 497 CE),⁹⁷ Gawsīšōʿ (the synod of Išōʿyahb I in 585 CE),⁹⁸ Yōḥannān (the synod of Gregory I in 605 CE)⁹⁹ in the diocese of *Beth Nūhadrā*;
- Barinos (the synod of Mar Isaac in 410 CE),¹⁰⁰ Mare (the synod of Dadīšōʿ in 424 CE),¹⁰¹ Afrahaṭ (the synod of Acacius in 486 CE)¹⁰² and through his secretary Ḥawahṭ¹⁰³ in the synod of Babai in 497 CE),¹⁰⁴ Moses (the synod of Mar Aba I in 544 CE),¹⁰⁵ Timothy (the synod of Išōʿyahb I in 585 CE and the synod of Gregory I in 605 CE)¹⁰⁶ in the diocese of *Beth Bḡāš*;
- Aḥādaḇūhī (the synod of Mar Isaac in 410 CE),¹⁰⁷ Qīrīs (the synod of Dadīšōʿ in 424 CE),¹⁰⁸ Marehraḥmeh (the synod of Babai in 497 CE),¹⁰⁹ Qamīšōʿ (the

93 Walker 2006, 89.

94 Walker 2006, 90.

95 Chabot 1902, 273–274.

96 Chabot 1902, 287.

97 Chabot 1902, 315.

98 Chabot 1902, 423.

99 Chabot 1902, 478.

100 Chabot 1902, 273–274.

101 Chabot 1902, 285.

102 Chabot 1902, 307.

103 The reading is not certain. Chabot 1902, 316.

104 Chabot 1902, 316.

105 Chabot 1902, 344–345, 350–351.

106 Chabot 1902, 423, 478.

107 Chabot 1902, 273–274.

108 Chabot 1902, 285.

109 Chabot 1902, 316.

synod of Ezekiel in 576 CE),¹¹⁰ Burzmihr (the synod of Gregory I in 605 CE)¹¹¹ in the diocese of *Beth Dāsen*;

- Aḥudemmeḥ (the synod of Joseph in 554 CE),¹¹² Yazd-panāḥ (the synod of Ezekiel in 576 CE),¹¹³ and Mar Aba (the synod of Iṣō'yahb I in 585 CE),¹¹⁴ Maremmeh (mentioned with regard to the patriarch Iṣō'yahb II),¹¹⁵ Iṣō'yahb III (before becoming the metropolitan of Erbil),¹¹⁶ in the diocese of *Nineveh*;
- Yōḥannān (the synod of Mar Babai in 497 CE),¹¹⁷ Simeon (the synod of Mar Aba I in 544 CE),¹¹⁸ Yazd-panāḥ (the synod of Joseph in 554 CE),¹¹⁹ and Bar Šabta (the synod of Ezekiel in 576 CE and the synod of Iṣō'yahb I in 585 CE),¹²⁰ Kelilīšō' (the synod of Gregory I in 605 CE)¹²¹ in the diocese of *Ma'alta*;
- 'Aqbālāhā, bishop of *Ramōnīn* and Noah, bishop of *Dabarinōs* (Rabarinḥesn)¹²² (both attested for the synod of Mar Isaac in 410 CE).¹²³

The Christian synods are also important as sources of information on customs spread in the region, especially in two cases. First, the synodical acts prohibit close-kin marriages among Christians, for the first time in 544 CE (known as the Mar Aba I's legislation) and again in 585 CE; this kind of marriage (in this particular region) can be interpreted a characteristically Zoroastrian form of marriage.¹²⁴ Second, both the Mar Aba I's legislation in 544 CE and the acts of the Seleucia-Ctesiphon synod in 554 CE became known for condemning marriages of Christians into "Magian families" and imposing sanctions against

110 Chabot 1902, 368.

111 Chabot 1902, 479.

112 Chabot 1902, 366.

113 Chabot 1902, 368.

114 Chabot 1902, 423.

115 Chron. Siirt 2.309–310.

116 Chabot 1902, 480, n. 1, 615.

117 Chabot 1902, 310–311, 316.

118 Chabot 1902, 344–345, 350–351.

119 Chabot 1902, 366.

120 Chabot 1902, 368, 423.

121 Chabot 1902, 479.

122 The reading is not certain; perhaps the name is a malformation of the Syriac name Rabarinḥesn. See Chabot 1902, 617.

123 Chabot 1902, 273.

124 Walker 2006, 240.

members of the clergy for such unions.¹²⁵ In this light, the picture of a considerable spread of Zoroastrian customs in the region becomes evident.

Another important Syriac source which illuminates the situation of both Christians and Zoroastrians in the Sasanian period is known as the *Legend of Mar Qardagh*. This source tells the story of Mar Qardagh who was appointed as the viceroy and margrave (paṭāḥšā and marzbān) in Arbela by King Shapur II (309–379 CE),¹²⁶ but later converted to Christianity and died as a martyr. However, the source is believed to have been written some 250 years after the persecutions of the Christians by Shapur II and consequently to reflect (very well) the cultural environment of (only) seventh-century Sasanian Empire during the reign of Khusro II (590–628 CE).¹²⁷

As far as the Zoroastrianism (labeled as “Magianism” [mgošūtā]) is concerned, the *Legend* mentions several particular Zoroastrian customs and institutions: the fire temples as the focal points of Zoroastrian cult, their private endowment and staffing, the use of fire altars (Syr. ʾadrōqē from Middle Persian—ādarōg), the keeping of a domestic Zoroastrian priest for the blessing of meals, the ritual use of the *barsom* (the bundle of twigs) for purification.¹²⁸

What is more, the main scene of events in the *Legend* takes place at the site called Melqi near Arbela, which is presented as the site of the fire temple. Remarkably, it appears that this name corresponds to the Akkadian name URUMil-qī-a, which is known as a major Neo-Assyrian temple, the akītu-shrine of the goddess Ishtar of Arbela.¹²⁹ The cult is well attested between the ninth and sixth centuries BCE. Unfortunately, however, there is an enormous gap of evidence in the post-Assyrian period from the sixth century BCE until the *Legend of Mar Qardagh*, which already pictures the place as a center of the Zoroastrian cult of fire. Despite the daunting lack of evidence, it has been tentatively suggested on the basis of evidence of continuity of local cults in the region (Ashur, and partly Nineveh) that the cult center at Melqi could witness the transformation of the cult of Ishtar into Anāhitā, who was frequently associated with Iranian fire temples, and next, from the seventh century CE on, the Melqi complex became the center of the Christian cult of Mar

125 Walker 2006, 240.

126 Qardagh is presented as overseeing out of Arbela a large swath of territory that would normally have been divided into three separate administrative units—Arbāyestān, Nōdšīragān (Nōd-Ardaxšīragān), and Garmekān. See Walker 2006, 122, n. 3.

127 See the latest and most in-depth edition and analysis by Walker 2006 who is followed here.

128 Walker 2006, 119.

129 Walker 2006, 248.

Qardagh, and the scene of the annual festival (and fair) in commemoration of the martyr.¹³⁰

The *Legend* also throws light on ideals and customs of the Late Sasanian elites. The ideal of a hero in this tradition required skills that could ensure victory on the battlefield—great physical strength, boldness, horsemanship, and prowess with weapons, especially the lance and bow. Consequently, the life of the Sasanian king and the magnates is presented as focused on participation in athletic pursuits (archery, polo, and the hunt), as well as in banqueting.¹³¹ According to the *Legend*, Mar Qardagh, the main protagonist, earned his appointment due to the performance in such Sasanian feats of individual strength. At the same time, Mar Qardagh is said to have an eminent genealogy going back to the royal “Assyrian” roots—he descended on his father’s side from the house of Nimrod and on his mother’s side from the house of Sennacherib.¹³² Qardagh’s father, Gušnōy is accordingly described as a “prominent man in the kingdom and distinguished among the magi”.¹³³ Qardagh’s genealogy cannot of course be taken literally, as this figure bears many legendary features.¹³⁴ However, it reveals the outlook of a Late Sasanian writer from Adiabene who thought of the Adiabene hereditary elites as having a local background, but, at the same time, presented them as fully integrated into the Sasanian aristocratic society. It should be stressed that Zoroastrianism was one of the indispensable aspects of this elite society.

To summarize, in the light of Syriac sources, the region of Adiabene appears to have been deeply penetrated by Zoroastrianism by the late Sasanian period. It appears that although the spread of Zoroastrianism cannot be limited only to upper classes, as it also took a firm root among ‘commoners’ in both cities and villages, Zoroastrianism became an integral and indispensable part of the social life of members of the Sasanian upper classes. Consequently, the rise of Christianity in the region faced opposition from the state-supported Zoroastrian cults in the first place.

At the same time, it should also be noted that the Sasanian documents (from outside Adiabene) mention other religious groups that also suffered persecution from the Sasanian officials. For instance, in the Pahlavi inscriptions from the time of Bahram II (274–293 CE), the empire’s chief mōbad, Kirdīr, speaks of the persecution of Jews, “shamans,” “Brahmins,” “zandiks” (probably a group

130 Walker 2006, 251–254, 271–274, 277–279.

131 Walker 2006, 121–163, esp. 160, 163.

132 Walker 2006, 210–211.

133 Walker 2006, 210.

134 See Walker 2006, 1.

of Manicheans), and two distinctive Christian groups: “Nazareans (*nāsrāy*) and “Christians” (*kristiyān*).¹³⁵ In this sense, it may be speculated that, next to the Jewish population (well attested in the sources) other religious groups frequently labeled as “polytheists” (especially local Semitic cults), may have lived in Sasanian Adiabene (see the case of Aitilāhā who is said to have been the priest of Šarbel before his conversion to Christianity). At the same time, given the overall picture of the religious situation in Adiabene, the question remains open if local Semitic cults, well attested in the Parthian period, did not largely succumb to the spread of state-supported Zoroastrianism in the Sasanian period (the temple of Melqi may likely be such an example).

It seems that we can infer from the Syriac sources that the majority of the population in the Adiabene region were speakers of Syriac and were of local origin (see Qardagh’s assumed ancestry). At the same time, Adiabene’s elites were deeply integrated with values of the aristocratic Zoroastrian social life of the Sasanians.

8.2 Archaeological Sites

A number of archaeological sites can be consulted in our quest for understanding the culture of Adiabene in the Hellenistic, Parthian, and Sasanian periods (see Figures 1, 3, 49–50).

8.2.1 *Arbela*

Arbela, the capital of Adiabene, is not available archaeologically on a large scale because of the dense settlement of the modern Erbil, especially the citadel area (see Figure 51).¹³⁶ Recent excavations in Erbil were limited in scale and yielded only two bodies of evidence relevant to the periods under investigation here. First, a joint Czech and Iraqi archaeological team under K. Nováček from the University of West Bohemia in Plzeň conducted some explorations in 2006–2007 (surface surveys and other research using non-destructive methods), which unearthed a small amount of stonework and pottery.¹³⁷ The latter is dated by the excavators, somewhat vaguely, to “the end of the fourth or the course of the third-first centuries” BCE. The Hellenistic pottery in Erbil includes two main classes—“black slips” and “red slips”—and is distinguished by

135 Walker 2006, 110.

136 Most finds are isolated and come mainly from the Neo-Assyrian times. See Unger 1932a, 141–142.

137 See Nováček, Chabr, Filipický, Janiček, Pavelka, Šída, Trefný, Vařeka 2008, 259–302.

the partial slip technique, which was widespread in Hellenistic Mesopotamia (see Figure 52).¹³⁸ Second, and more importantly, the recent excavation of a Neo-Assyrian vaulted tomb in the lower town of Erbil some 500 m north-west of the citadel was conducted under the auspices of the *Directorate of Antiquities in Erbil* and the *Deutsches Archäologisches Institut* between 2008 and 2011. It revealed two inhumation cemeteries featuring continued use from the Achaemenid to Hellenistic-Parthian and Sasanian times.¹³⁹ Thus, although our data from ancient Arbela is still meager and very fragmented, the two most recent discoveries give more strength to the long-held assumption that the site of modern Erbil must have featured a continuous settlement and the continuity of material culture over millennia.¹⁴⁰

8.2.2 *Kilizu*

Another major site within Arbelitis is located some 30 km southwest of Erbil: the mound of ancient Kilizu (present day Qaṣr Šemāmok), which covers more than 70 hectares.¹⁴¹ The site was briefly explored by A.H. Layard and v. Place in the nineteenth century CE,¹⁴² and by G. Furlani from the University of Florence in 1933 within one campaign.¹⁴³ The most recent investigation of the site began in 2011 (Lyon University and EPHE-Sorbonne University) and was so far mainly focused on Neo- and Middle-Assyrian layers.¹⁴⁴

In anticipation of the final results of the modern study, Furlani's excavations remain our main source of knowledge on Parthian Kilizu, as the survey managed to discover a large necropolis from Assyrian and Parthian times on the western side of the tell. Particularly interesting are two Parthian ceramic sarcophagi, rectangular in shape (but with rounded ends), with blue green glaze and relief decorations (see Figures 53–54).¹⁴⁵ On the long sides of the sarcophagi, the decorations present grapes alternating with a frontal nude female figure in an arched niche.¹⁴⁶ Three different interpretations of this image can be quoted. First, Furlani identified the female figure as the goddess Ishtar.¹⁴⁷

138 Nováček, Chabr, Filipský, Janiček, Pavelka, Šída, Trefný, Vařeka 2008, 279–281.

139 Kopanias, MacGinnis, Ur 2015, 19.

140 Nováček, Chabr, Filipský, Janiček, Pavelka, Šída, Trefný, Vařeka 2008, 260; Kopanias, MacGinnis, Ur 2015, 19.

141 See Postgate 1976–80, 591; Invernizzi 2009.

142 Layard 1853, 223–225.

143 See Furlani 1934a; Furlani 1934b; Furlani 1934c.

144 Kopanias, MacGinnis, Ur 2015, 45.

145 Furlani 1934b, 40–44.

146 Invernizzi 2009.

147 Furlani 1934b, 40.

Tubach, on the other hand, understood grapes as symbols of fertility, that is, as a Dionysian motif.¹⁴⁸ Lastly, according to Invernizzi, the relief decorations can be understood as “symbols of fertility that allude to the continuation of life after death.”¹⁴⁹

Because the relief is not completed by any inscription, all attempts at identification of the female figure must remain tentative. At the same time, the remarkable juxtaposing of spheres of life and death indeed suits some features of the mythological image of Ishtar, especially in the light of mythical traditions concerning Ishtar and Tammuz: Ishtar, goddess of sexuality, fertility and war, was paired with the dying god Tammuz.¹⁵⁰ In this sense, the very epicurean symbols (grapes and a naked woman) can indeed be understood as symbols of the afterlife and spiritual rebirth. What is more, the cult of Ishtar was traditionally strong in this area,¹⁵¹ and this popularity seems not to have decreased in Hellenistic-Parthian-Sasanian Adiabene: the name of the first attested king of Adiabene (Abdissar),¹⁵² as well as another Semitic name used in sources for Adiabene (Natounissar, see below),¹⁵³ contained a theophoric element indicating the goddess Ishtar.¹⁵⁴ Stylistic features of the two coffins are also important: Kilizu sarcophagi (good parallels come from Ashur too¹⁵⁵) belong to a type of covered troughs or “bath-tub”-shapes which sets them apart from the slipper-shaped coffins commonly used in Babylonia.¹⁵⁶

8.2.3 *Nineveh*

Given the fact that the recent excavations on the territory of ancient Adiabene are still in their infancy (Tell Baqrta, Kilik Mishik, possibly Bazyan and Tell Sitak), the most important archaeological data concerning Adiabene in the Hellenistic, Parthian, and Sasanian periods comes from the three famous cities forming once the Assyrian triangle: Nineveh, Ashur, and Nimrud.

The ancient site of Nineveh has been explored and excavated many times, especially by British travelers and archaeologists in the nineteenth century and in the first half of the twentieth century. Given the time elapsed since these

148 Tubach 1986, 321, nn. 321–323, esp. n. 323.

149 Invernizzi 2009.

150 Langdon 1914, 50–54; Abusch 1992, 453–455.

151 Lambert 2004, 35–39; Nevling Porter 2004, 41–44.

152 Lipiński 1982, 117–120.

153 Beyer 1998, 33.

154 Marciak 2014a, 219–220, 224.

155 Andrae, Lenzen 1933, 91–96.

156 Colledge 1977, 110.

excavations and their methods, we have no clear picture of Nineveh's stratigraphy, and as a result our inquiry into Nineveh's culture must rely on single items unearthed during many archaeological campaigns (see Figure 55).

Explorations and excavations in Nineveh brought to light a number of artifacts which, generally speaking, can be labeled as having a Greek character.

An inscribed column was found in the ruins of the temple of Nabu;¹⁵⁷ the inscription records a dedication of Apollophanes, son of Asklepiades to θεοὶ ἐπήκοοι ("attentive gods").¹⁵⁸ This item is of great importance for at least two reasons. First, Apollophanes bears the titles of *strategos* and *epistates* of the city (στρατηγὸς καὶ ἐπιστάτης τῆς πόλεως).¹⁵⁹ Both terms are attested as Greek magistrate titles in other cities in the region: Dura-Europos, Babylon and Susa.¹⁶⁰ Likewise, a similar Greek inscription on a reused Assyrian altar was found in Nineveh, south of Kuyunjik: the inscription is explicitly dedicated to the city (πόλει) on behalf of Apollonios, son of Demetrios, who is called ἄρχων¹⁶¹ (and this magistrate title was also in use in Palmyra¹⁶²). Thus, we can infer from these inscriptions that there was a Greek municipal organization in Nineveh (if not even a *polis*¹⁶³); that is, the Greek language was used to communicate in official matters and, generally speaking, it is likely that legal qualifications of offices followed Greek magistrate models. Secondly, the Apollophanes inscription holds a date of the dedication: the text is slightly damaged, and it seems that we can be certain only about the reconstruction of the first and third letter of the date: α[]τ, which gives a date between 311 and 391, that is between 63 and 153 CE (if the Arsacid era is used) or between 1 BCE and 89 CE (if it is counted according to the Seleucid era).¹⁶⁴ This date sets some historical context for the settlement of Nineveh—it does not imply the date of its foundation, but suggests a *terminus ante quem* for the introduction of Greek municipal organization in Nineveh.

157 For the image, see Reade 1998, 69, fig. 3. For the interpretation, see Thompson Campbell, Hutchinson 1929, 140–142; Rostovtzeff 1935, 57, n. 5; Le Rider 1967, 15, n. 2; D. Oates 1968, 61; Reade 1998, 69, fig. 3; Reade 2001, 193–195; de Rossi 2004, 40–41; Thommen 2010, 459–460.

158 Thompson Campbell, Hutchinson 1929, 140–142; *SEG VII* (1934), II, no. 37.

159 Thompson Campbell, Hutchinson 1929, 140–142; *SEG VII* (1934), II, no. 37.

160 Teixidor 1987, 187–193, esp. 190–191; Thommen 2010, 460.

161 Postgate 1970, 133–136.

162 Starcky 1963, 51.

163 Suggested by Reade 1998, 68.

164 De Rossi 2004, 41; Thommen 2010, 460. For the Arsacid era, see Bickerman 1944, 73–83, esp. 80. For other (probably less correct) readings of the date, see Thompson Campbell, Hutchinson 1929, 140–142 (the first editors) and Rostovtzeff 1935, 57, n. 5.

A small shrine was unearthed in the Nineveh plain between the mounds of Kuyunjik and Nebi Yunus (see Figure 55):¹⁶⁵ although it comes from the second or third century CE, its plan still resembles Assyrian models (the *cella* and the *ante-cella* are of the same width).¹⁶⁶ A statue of Hermes (ca. 1.20 m) was found inside (see Figure 56): Hermes is a well-known Greek deity (identified here due to the wings attached to his head and ankles), but the statue has some unusual stylistic features: Hermes hides his hands behind his cloak.¹⁶⁷ This gesture is definitely not of Greek character; instead, it has striking parallels in Parthian art (e.g. from Palmyra, Olbia, Turkmenistan), although its origin and meaning are not entirely clear.¹⁶⁸

Another small statue found in Nineveh (on Kuyunjik) is that of Herakles (height 50 cm).¹⁶⁹ To be precise, this type of Herakles' presentation is called Herakles Epitrapezios ("on the table") in the Lysippos style:¹⁷⁰ it depicts Herakles seated on a large rock and holding a cup of wine; the first such sculpture was made by Lysippos for Alexander the Great, but later on this model became very popular and was reproduced all over the world.¹⁷¹ Indeed, Herakles Epitrapezios from Nineveh is considered to be stylistically a product of the distinctive local manufacture of the first or second century CE;¹⁷² the sculpture bears an inscription which names both the sculptor—Diodoros—and the donor—Sarapiodoros, son of Artemidoros—and indicates that the dedication was made in fulfillment of a vow.¹⁷³

165 See Scott, MacGinnis 1990, 69–71.

166 D. Oates 1968, 61.

167 See Colledge 1979, 232; Mathiesen 1992a, 51; Mathiesen 1992b, 187–188.

168 It has been suggested (Cumont 1932–33, 94; Ghirshman 1948, 305–306) that this gesture could be a continuation of the etiquette of the Achaemenid court, where the guests had to hide their hands in their sleeves as a gesture of respect towards the king (Xen. *Cyr.* 8.3.10; *Hell.* 2.1.8). This "classic" interpretation was recently called into question by Santoro 2005, who suggests that Xenophon's references are later interpolations and the gesture simply reflected the climatic conditions of Central Asia: protecting one's hands against the cold. Alternatively, the gesture may be understood as a peaceful presentation without arms. Namely, Parthian kings and aristocrats were normally presented with armor—a long sword, two knives or a bow. Personal communication—Prof. M.J. Olbrycht, May 14, 2012.

169 Reade 1998, 70.

170 See object no.: 1881.0701.1 at http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/search.aspx.

171 Pollitt 1990, 102.

172 See Bartman 1992, 181 (1st century); Invernizzi 1989, 623–636 (2nd century).

173 Invernizzi 1989, 623–636; Bartman 1992, 181.

A very small but telling item from Greco-Parthian Nineveh is a small alabaster base on which once three statues stood¹⁷⁴ (height 8 cm, width ca. 19 cm, depth between 6–8 at left and 5 at right).¹⁷⁵ The base is completed with an inscription on its front size: εὐτυχεῖ [sic]¹⁷⁶ This phrase should be understood as the imperative¹⁷⁷ and not as a noun in the dative case,¹⁷⁸ and thus expresses a wish of well-being (“may you be lucky”).¹⁷⁹ Such a phrase (εὐτύχει in the singular and εὐτυχεῖτε in the plural) was frequently inscribed on small objects (e.g. gems, rings, bracelets, etc.) which were offered as gifts in ancient times.¹⁸⁰ In this light, a small alabaster base from Nineveh testifies to one of the more appealing aspects of everyday life—the base was a gift, and its inscription expressed a wish of well-being for the receiver. At the same time, this phrase, taken literally, conveys a wish of favor to be bestowed on the receiver by Tyche—a very popular deity in the Hellenistic and Roman world.¹⁸¹

The available data from Nineveh indicates that the cultural environment of this city featured many Greek elements from circa the first century BCE to the third century CE: its municipal organization had Greek features, and its elites bore Greek names and worshipped (at least by name) Greek deities: Hermes, Herakles, Tyche, Hera. We also know from literary sources that Greek was used as a spoken language in Nineveh (see Philostr. *Vita Apol.* 1.19).¹⁸² At the same time, we possess some data from Nineveh which shows the presence of other cultural elements, to which we now turn our attention.

First of all, pottery data (however meager) features a continuous record from ca. 350 BCE until 250 CE including glazed ceramics, Seleucid plainware vessels (dated to 350–150 BCE), as well as typically Parthian green glazed wares (from 150 BCE to 250 CE).¹⁸³ This evidence suggests that Nineveh’s culture had a variety of cultural influences. Furthermore, there is also a record of objects specifically

174 For the image, see Reade 1998, 71, Fig. 5–6.

175 Reade 1998, 70–71.

176 Reade 1998, 70–71.

177 *SEG* XLVIII (1998), 601 (no. 1838, B1).

178 Reade 1998, 70, followed by Haider 2008, 203.

179 *SEG* XLVIII (1998), 601 (no. 1838, B1).

180 For a long list of parallels quoted mainly from *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum*, see Marciak 2014a, 212–213.

181 Haider 2008, 202–203. For Tyche, see Martin 1999, 877–878. Perhaps, yet another Greek divinity, Hera is attested in Nineveh, through an inscription on a small sherd. See Reade 2001, 187.

182 Reade 1998, 71. For a full list of Greek inscriptions from Nineveh, see *SEG* XLVIII (1998), 600–601 (no. 1838) and *SEG* LI (2001), 592 (no. 1913).

183 For the post-Assyrian ceramic data from Nineveh, see Eiland 1996.

Parthian in style. Namely, part of a base of a limestone statue is preserved—it shows a foot wearing a sandal; this small item has its best parallels in Hatra and has consequently been dated to the late second or early third century CE.¹⁸⁴ Two other small objects bear Parthian inscriptions. First, there is a decorated bone-handle (featuring an engraved colored pattern of a rosette with a running meander) on which the following inscription was incised—“Tiridat (son) of Bay.”¹⁸⁵ Secondly, a three-line inscription was found on a broken scapula; the text is mostly illegible, but at least an expression [l-y]d phṭ’ ... (“into the hand of the governor”) has been identified, and consequently the whole inscription has been tentatively recognized as a delivery of goods to the governor (and dated to between the first and third centuries CE).¹⁸⁶ Another eye-catching deposit, labeled frequently as “Parthian gold from Nineveh”, comes from three previously unlooted tombs excavated in 1852—it includes rich burial goods made of gold, among others: face masks, mouth- and eye-pieces, earrings, finger rings, beads, garment plaques, an *aureus* of Tiberius, coin impressions and leaves (impressed from Trajan’s *semis*).¹⁸⁷

Furthermore, there is also a slight record of items of clearly Roman provenance. This mainly consists of metal (especially bronze) objects, frequently belonging to Roman military equipment: Roman eagle mount, bronze applied decoration, buckle, belt fitting, fibula, comb, and caltrop.¹⁸⁸ There has been debate as to whether this evidence, taken together with extant Roman coins and (scant, unpublished) ceramics, could testify to a Roman settlement in Nineveh.¹⁸⁹ It should be noted, however, that the evidence of Roman material culture in Nineveh appears to be too circumstantial to suggest a long-term occupation.¹⁹⁰ Roman military activity did indeed take place in this region,

184 Reade 1998, 75–76.

185 Reade 1998, 76, who (without explanation) suggests “the first or even second century BC”.

186 See Reade 1998, 77 and Fuller, Bivar 1996, 30 in particular.

187 J.E. Curtis 1976.

188 Eiland 1998 and Reade 1998, 78.

189 Eiland 1998. Speaking about the coins, two large hoards were unearthed by the British excavation in 1929–30: a hoard of bronze issues of circa 597 coins (especially the coins of Mithradates II, ca. 124–90 BCE) and a mixed Parthian-Roman hoard of 387 silver coins (121 tetradrachms from Antioch by Philip Philadelphos, 29 tetradrachms from Antioch and Tyre (Nero to Geta), 3 didrachms of Trajan from Caesarea, 139 denarii (Galba to Plautilla), and 92 Parthian drachms including issues of Gotarzes II, (likely) Mithradates IV, Vologases III, Vologases V, Artabanos IV). See Hill 1931 and Raschke 1978, 828, n. 759.

190 Likewise, there is no substantial evidence in the archaeological record to support an early date for the foundation of a Roman province in this part of Northern Mesopotamia (especially during the reign of Trajan). See Lightfoot 1990, 123–124.

especially during the reign of Trajan (114–116 CE) and Septimius Severus (ca. 195 CE),¹⁹¹ but this did not apparently make a substantial mark on Nineveh's material culture.

All in all, speaking in terms of pure numbers, the evidence for Greek culture in Nineveh is most overwhelming, Parthian cultural presence is also considerable, while Roman artifacts appear to be incidental evidence. This picture is very striking if we take into account the fact that Nineveh was located not in the Aegean world (traditionally inhabited by the Greeks), but in the area settled by Semitic peoples using various dialects of Aramaic at that time (and later Syriac). At the same time, it is commonly acknowledged that (originally) Greek deities were frequently identified with their local counterparts as their cult spread in the Middle East, and as a result Greek and Oriental cults influenced each other. The statue of Hermes is certainly a good example of this phenomenon. Therefore, it appears that Greek cultural influence can be interpreted in various ways. Firstly, it has been suggested that Hellenistic-Parthian Nineveh was strictly a Greek polis founded by the Seleucids (and later acknowledged in its rights by the Parthians).¹⁹² Secondly, it is also theoretically possible that we may speak about a Greek enclave within an Oriental city; otherwise, the Greek artifacts could simply testify to the dissemination of Greek culture (especially among the elites) within a mainly Oriental city.

8.2.4 *Ashur*

The city of Ashur was relatively well explored due to systematic German excavations in the first half of the twentieth century,¹⁹³ as well as in more recent times.¹⁹⁴ The excavations revealed that Ashur accounted for a thriving city from the end of the first millennium BCE until the middle of the third century CE. To be precise, four post-Assyrian layers of occupation can be distinguished: the late first millennium BCE, phase I of the Parthian (Arsacid) period (the first century CE), phase II of the Parthian period (the second century CE), and phase III of the late Parthian and early Sasanian periods (from the end of the

191 For an overview of Roman campaigns against Parthia in the second and third centuries CE, see Olbrycht 2010a, 195, 199–200 and Lightfoot 1990, 121–124.

192 It is well known that the Parthians used to acknowledge the rights of the Greek cities (bestowed by the Seleucids) once they conquered them from the Seleucids, but they never initiated the Greek foundations on their own. See Frye 1984, 244–245; Dąbrowa 2006–2007, 13–20.

193 For the history of German excavations conducted by the German Oriental Society, see Andrae 1977, 273–281.

194 For recent German excavations in Ashur, see Dittmann 1990, 157–171; Hrouda 1991, 169–182; Hauser 1994, esp. 5–15; Miglus 2000; Miglus 2002; Hauser 2011, 117, fig. 2.

second century CE until the middle of the third century); the peak of the settlement took place during phase III.¹⁹⁵

The archaeological excavations in Ashur allowed us to reconstruct the sphere of public religious buildings in Parthian Ashur which included the following structures (see Figures 57–59): the temple of Ashur, the sanctuary of Herakles, the festival house (*bit akītu*), *ziggurat* and two other structures approximately known as *Freitreppenbau* and *peripteros*.¹⁹⁶ Especially the first three religious buildings give us a good opportunity to look into Ashur's religious life.

The temple of Assur was built in the north-eastern corner of what used to be the Neo-Assyrian temple compound of the god Assur. It consisted of three *iwans* (two built in the second century CE and the third one constructed in the third century CE) set back from a walled courtyard.¹⁹⁷ Inside the temple, numerous inscriptions of worshippers were found on the floor and benches along the walls—they provide us with an invaluable insight into the life of Ashur's population in the Parthian period,¹⁹⁸ especially around the early third century CE.¹⁹⁹ Firstly, most names of worshippers are Semitic and derived from traditional names of Babylonian and Assyrian divinities.²⁰⁰ Secondly, although many deities are mentioned in the inscriptions, Assur and his comfort, Serū appear most frequently.²⁰¹ Thirdly, the two months mentioned most frequently in the inscriptions are *Nisan* (particularly between the eighth and the twelfth day of *Nisan*) and *Šebet* (especially between the 20th and the 26th day

195 Hauser 1996, 55–65. See also Andrae, Lenzen 1933, 2–3. The excavations also revealed that some settlement existed in Ashur between the fourth and second centuries BCE (as proven by finds of Attic glaze pottery, Hellenistic lamps and coinage); furthermore, after the Sasanian conquest, the settlement still continued, although on a smaller scale. See Hauser 1996, 57–58; Hauser 2011, 127.

196 Additionally, several smaller areas of private buildings, potters' workshops, and cemeteries were identified. See Hauser 2011, esp. Abb. 2 and 127–129.

197 Andrae, Lenzen 1933, 73–88, fig. 41–42, pl. 28–29a; Andrae 1977, 250–252, fig. 228; Downey 1988, 156, fig. 72–73.

198 See Andrae, Jensen 1920, 1–47; Beyer 1998, 12–24.

199 This dating is indicated by dates in some inscriptions, which range from 511 to 539. If the Seleucid era is employed, it gives a period between 199/200 and 227/228 CE. See Andrae, Jensen 1920, 22–23; Beyer 1998, 12, 15–24; Downey 1988, 156; Haider 2008, 197. If the Arsacid era was intended, then the inscriptions would be dated to between 263 and 291 CE. However, the use of the Arsacid era is excluded due to the archaeological context (level IV lasted only until around the mid-third century).

200 Haider 2008, 197–198.

201 Haider 2008, 197–198.

of that month), which points to the celebration of two traditional Assyrian festivals—the New Year (*akītu*) and that of *parak šīmāte*,²⁰² which coincides well with the fact the Assyrian *bit akītu* was rebuilt and used in the Parthian period.²⁰³

Another important temple uncovered by the excavations was located at the southwest corner of the Assyrian temple compound: its plan followed old Babylonian models (the ante-cella and the cella, both of the same width), and its cult room contained a stele with a relief depicting Herakles (see Figure 6o).²⁰⁴ As a result, it is believed that the sanctuary was devoted to this deity.²⁰⁵ The relief presents a naked Herakles (standing front), whose right hand rests on a club, while his left arm is covered with a lion's skin. The relief is dated to the first or third century CE.²⁰⁶ Since the inscriptions in Ashur do not know the Greek name Herakles at all, there is good reason to believe that the deity presented on the relief was interpreted as a local counterpart of the Greek Herakles—likely as Nergal.²⁰⁷

Although the available architectural and epigraphic data from Ashur is striking in showing a great deal of continuity of local Semitic traditions, it also shows traces of other cultural trends. For instance, the sanctuary of Herakles is rich in both Greek and Iranian decorative motifs (Ionicizing capitals of half-columns and pilasters, as well as Parthian stuccos); likewise, the architecture of the temple of Assur used Parthian *iwans* and Hellenistic rectangular pillars with engaged columns.²⁰⁸ Another good example of a mixture of different cultural elements is a large *pithos* with scratched drawings and Aramaic inscriptions (see Figure 6i).²⁰⁹ The drawings show a pair of deities (a male deity on the throne and a female on the couch) and worshippers: the inscriptions identify the divine pair as Bel and Nanaia.²¹⁰ Remarkably, these traditional

202 Hauser 2011, 140–141.

203 Andrae, Lenzen 1933, 89–90; Andrae, Haller 1955, 79–80; Downey 1988, 156, 158; Haider 2008, 198; Hauser 2011, 140–141.

204 Andrae, Lenzen 1933, 71–72; Andrae, Haller 1955, 81; Andrae 1977, 237–239, fig. 239; Downey 1988, 149–150; Haider 2008, 195.

205 Andrae, Lenzen 1933, 72; Andrae, Haller 1955, 81; Andrae 1977, 252; Downey 1988, 150.

206 Downey 1969, 11, 95 and Mathiesen 1992b, 194 respectively.

207 Haider 2008, 195–196. Herakles was identified as Nergal in Palmyra and Hatra (Aggoula 1985, 9–10 and Gawlikowski 2000, 155–159); it could also be interpreted as Gad (Kaizer 2000, 230–231), but the latter's name does not appear in Ashur's inscriptions. See Beyer 1998, 12–13 (A 10 and A 14.4).

208 Downey 1988, 158; Haider 2008, 197–198.

209 Andrae, Lenzen 1933, 109–111, fig. 46; Andrae 1977, 259–260, fig. 239.

210 Beyer 1998, 14 (no. 15b).

Babylonian and Assyrian deities wear clothes which can be identified as typically Parthian.²¹¹

To summarize, Parthian Ashur turns out to be a highly interesting case of cultural continuity and change. First of all, Ashur's population spoke Aramaic, worshipped traditional Babylonian and Assyrian deities and observed their festivals in buildings constructed in conformity with old customs. At the same time, new trends, both Greek and Parthian, were also accepted. In the end, the old traditions and the new trends appear to have influenced each other, leading to a highly distinctive final product.

8.2.5 *Nimrud*

Although the ancient site of Nimrud has been subject to archaeological excavations on many occasions, it was only the 1957 campaign under D. Oates which revealed concise archaeological data concerning Nimrud's settlement in "post-Assyrian" times. Namely, the excavations revealed a Hellenistic settlement on the south-east corner of the mound where six building levels could be distinguished: level 6 (beginning ca. 250–240 BCE), level 5 (starting approximately 220–210 BCE), level 4 (beginning ca. 180 BCE), level 3 (a late phase of Level 4 starting after 150 BCE), level 2 (started around 145 BCE and ending in violent destruction), and Level 1 (a short occupation after 140 BCE).²¹² Hellenistic Nineveh was "little more than an occasional small village and a burial ground",²¹³ and the village consisted of irregular agglomerations of rooms (between 2 and 4) arranged around small courtyards where bread ovens and brick-covered drainage pits (apparently serving as a secondary source of rainwater) were located.²¹⁴

In terms of cultural features, two groups of artifacts are particularly revealing. First, the uncovered pottery includes "new wares and decorative motifs clearly derived from the Hellenistic pottery of Syria and Kilikia"²¹⁵ (particularly red-painted wares imitating the Attic pottery), thus testifying to the adoption of new trends in pottery even by simple villagers in Northern Mesopotamia;²¹⁶ at the same time, Mesopotamian ceramic tradition (featuring distinctive Assyrian decorations and forms like impressed stamps or so called pipe lamps)

²¹¹ Haider 2008, 198–199.

²¹² D. Oates, J. Oates 1958, 115–118; D. Oates 1968, 64; J. Oates, D. Oates 2001, 260–261.

²¹³ J. Oates, D. Oates 2001, 269.

²¹⁴ D. Oates, J. Oates 1958, 133; D. Oates 1968, 64; J. Oates, D. Oates 2001, 261.

²¹⁵ J. Oates, D. Oates 2001, 268.

²¹⁶ J. Oates, D. Oates 2001, 268.

remained strong.²¹⁷ Secondly, the 1957 excavation brought to light a number of bronze coins: nine coins of Seleukos III (226/5–223 BCE, mint at Antioch), two of Antiochos III (223–187 BCE, mints at Apamea and Ecbatana), one of Seleukos IV (187–175 BCE, struck in Antioch or Akke), two of Alexander I Balas (150–145 BCE, mint at Antioch), and finally one of Demetrios II Nikator (146–140 BCE, uncertain provenance).²¹⁸ While silver issues were usually kept over longer periods of time and could be used far away from their homelands (because of their precious substance), bronze issues were primarily designed for local trade.²¹⁹ In this context, the provenance of uncovered bronze coins speaks volumes about Nimrud's trade and commercial connections.²²⁰ That is to say, they testify to Nineveh's much closer ties with western parts of the Seleucid kingdom (Antioch in the first place) than with its eastern regions (Seleucia or Ecbatana).²²¹

8.2.6 *The Eski Mosul Dam Salvage Project and the North Jazira Salvage Project*

In addition to the archaeological data known to us from large settlements within “the Assyrian triangle”, important data on the rural landscape of the Nineveh region was brought to light by archaeological investigations conducted in northwestern Iraq in the 1980s (see Figure 2).²²²

First of all, the (Saddam) Eski Mosul Dam Salvage Project preceded the construction of a dam on the Tigris River north of Mosul in the Nineveh province (built in 1980–85). The project concerned a number of sites alongside the Tigris on its both sides, some of which revealed important Hellenistic to Sasanian material (especially pottery, but also architectural remains): Tell Deir Situn, Grai Darki, Hatara, Tell Jalluqeh, Tell Jigan, Tell Mohammed Arab, Tell Jessary, Khirbet Khatuniyeh, Tell Thuwajj, Tell Fisna.²²³ Additionally, part of the (Saddam) Eski Mosul Dam Salvage Project was also carried out in the Zammar region in 1985/86 along the right bank of the Tigris River (by the river and up to the escarpment); within the Zammar archaeological project, seven sites (Tell Abu Dhahir, Siyana Ulya, Khirbet Shireena, Khirbet Karhasan, Seh

217 D. Oates, J. Oates, 1958, 128–129, 132; D. Oates 1968, 64–65, 124–127; J. Oates, D. Oates 2001, 268.

218 Jenkins 1958, 163–165. For the rulers, see H.H. Schmitt, E. Vogt 1993, 714.

219 Jenkins 1958, 165–166; D. Oates 1968, 64, n. 1.

220 J. Oates, D. Oates 2001, 268.

221 Jenkins 1958, 166–168; D. Oates 1968, 64, n. 1; J. Oates, D. Oates 2001, 268.

222 A good overview is offered by Ball 1996, 415–416.

223 See Killick, Roaf 1983; Roaf 1984; Black, Killick 1985; Black, Ball 1987.

Qubba, Tell Gir Matbakh, and Tell Shelgiyya) were excavated, all of which revealed Hellenistic to Early Islamic material; surface investigations took place at another 29 sites, seven of which contained Hellenistic to Sasanian material.²²⁴

What is more, another important archaeological project closely related to the Eski Mosul Dam Salvage Project in the Zammar province (though formally independent) was the North Jazira Salvage Project, especially its part called the Tell al-Hawa Project from 1986 to 1989. Located in the center of the Iraqi North Jazira plain about 90 km southwest of Mosul, Tell al-Hawa is an immense site which covers some 80 hectares including the main Acropolis and a number of smaller mounds belonging to the Lower Town Area.²²⁵ The archaeological project concerned not only Tell al-Hawa, but also the region within an area of some 220 square km.²²⁶

The results of archaeological investigations in the Zammar and the Tell al-Hawa region, taken together, yielded an important body of information concerning a well-defined territory located in the triangle marked by the Sinjar hills to the south, present-day Syrian border to the southwest and the Tigris to the northeast.²²⁷ Although the findings from the Hellenistic, Parthian-Roman, and Sasanian periods are mainly limited to pottery, the data obtained are still useful as they allow us to reconstruct the distribution of the sites (and, occasionally, to make conclusions on their general nature) and consequently gain some understanding of the settlement in a given period. The data indicates that the number of settlements was constant in the Tell el-Hawa region and relatively high alongside the Tigris (here only two other historical periods, the Khabur and Late Islamic, featured a higher number of settlements) in the Hellenistic period.²²⁸ What is more, the Hellenistic period witnessed the introduction of several major agricultural and technological innovations in the region: bell-shaped sunken silos for long-term storage of grain, hour-glass-shaped (Pompeian) mills, pyramidal loom-weights, incurved rim bowls and amphorae, terracotta figurines and lamps cast in two-part molds.²²⁹ To conclude, the Hellenistic period in this region appears to have been “a period of considerable rural prosperity and stability”.²³⁰

²²⁴ See Ball 1996, 415; Ball 2003; Simpson 2007.

²²⁵ Ball 1996, 415; Ball, Tucker, Wilkinson 1989, 4, 20.

²²⁶ Ball 1996, 415–416.

²²⁷ Ball, Tucker, Wilkinson 1989, 2; Ball 1996, 415.

²²⁸ Ball 1996, 417.

²²⁹ Simpson 2007, 98.

²³⁰ Ball 1996, 417.

As far as the Roman-Parthian period is concerned, the archaeological record shows “some decline in population and prosperity, and increasingly rural nature” of the settlement, especially alongside the Tigris, where the number of settlements dropped dramatically by about 50 percent.²³¹ This situation may be interpreted as a result of political instability, since this region witnessed several military campaigns between Rome and the Parthians/Sasanians, and may twice have fallen under longer Roman control (Trajan and Septimius Severus).²³² In the Byzantine and Sasanian periods, the number of settlements increased, though not to the level attested throughout the Hellenistic period; this development may in turn reflect “a higher degree of control by one or the other power over the area”.²³³

Besides the general data showing us the distribution of settlement patterns in the region, archaeological investigations in the Zammar region revealed more specific data about several sites. For instance, the site of Seh Qubba is located on a rocky bluff some 40m high overlooking the Tigris (on its western bank) and surrounding countryside.²³⁴ The excavations revealed that, in addition to its strategic and naturally defensible position, it featured remains of walls and (perhaps earthen) ramparts.²³⁵ What is more, two distinctive building levels could be distinguished (marked by the presence of brittle ware characteristic of Roman pottery in Northern Mesopotamia in the third and fourth centuries CE; additionally, remains of mosaic have been found).²³⁶ The excavators suggested that the Roman settlement (lack of Hellenistic remains) at Seh Qubba had a military function: it was a Severan foundation (after 199 CE) or a re-foundation (which would include a brief occupation during Trajan, 114–117 CE, or Lucius Verus in 164–166 CE) and could possibly be identified with *Castra Maurorum* (one of three main strongholds, including Nisibis and Singara, ceded by Rome to the Sasanians in 363 CE—see Amm. Marc. 25.7.9).²³⁷ The settlement at Seh Qubba continued in the Sasanian period, as attested by

²³¹ Ball 1996, 418.

²³² Ball 1996, 417 describes this area as an “unstable imperial frontier zone that was constantly changing hands, first between the Roman and Parthians, then between the Byzantines and Sasanians”. Likewise Ball 2003, 18 speaks about “constant shifting of frontiers”. This is perhaps a slight exaggeration, since this region came into Roman possession for a longer period only after 298 CE.

²³³ Ball 1996, 418.

²³⁴ Ball 2003, 65.

²³⁵ Ball 2003, 69–70, 79–80.

²³⁶ Ball 2003, 79–80.

²³⁷ Ball 2003, 80.

an increasing amount of Sasanian pottery in the archaeological record (honeycomb and smeared ware, as well as various types of stamped pottery).²³⁸

In turn, Tell Abu Dhahir is a multi-period mound which can be seen as being connected with the settlement at Seh Qubba in the Roman period.²³⁹ Namely, Tell Abu Dhahir has a strategically important position in the region—it is located at the junction of the Tigris and Wadi Suwaidiyah (a minor perennial tributary draining from the west) and a short distance north of the junction of the Tigris and Wadi Bardiyah (flowing from the south); what is more, because of the nearby side channel of the Tigris, there may have been a ford close to Tell Abu Dhahir in ancient times.²⁴⁰ The excavation at Tell Abu Dhahir revealed remains of residential buildings, especially a walled large courtyard building with a row of rooms; including remains of a mosaic.²⁴¹ These remains were tentatively interpreted as some sort of modest “villa” connected with the garrison at Seh Qubba.²⁴²

8.3 Numismatic and Epigraphic Evidence

Coins from Adiabene are rare, but they do exist. In fact, we can distinguish two groups among extant coins from Adiabene. The first group may be labeled “the royal coinage” of the kingdom of Adiabene, and the second as “autonomous city coinage” of the city called Natounissarokerta on the Kapros.

8.3.1 *Royal Coinage*

Turning our attention to the first group of coinage, we know of coins struck on behalf of two kings of Adiabene—Abdissar and Monobazos I (see Figures 62–65; see also chapter 8.4.2 and chapter 9.1 for the history of the rule of Abdissar and Monobazos).

Abdissar’s coins include several issues, one of which may be safely identified due to an inscription preserved on one coin—[BAΣ]IΔE[ΩΣ] [AB] ΔΙΣΣΑΡΟΥ [A]ΔΑΙΑΒΗΝΟΥ.²⁴³ This item belongs to type 2 of Abdissar’s

²³⁸ Ball 2003, 70–72, 81.

²³⁹ Ball 1996, 417–418; Simpson 2007, 1.

²⁴⁰ Simpson 2007, 1.

²⁴¹ Simpson 2007, 97–98.

²⁴² Ball 1996, 418.

²⁴³ See de Callatay 1996, 135–145; Grabowski 2011, 117–140. The reading [A]ΔΑΙΑΒΗΝΟΥ can be easily explained as a phonetic form of [A]ΔΙΑΒΗΝΟΥ: see Marciak 2014a, 225, n. 58 (who relies on Tromp 2005, 31 and 35).

coinage: its obverse features the bust of the king (facing right), with a short curly beard and short hair; the king wears a tiara (a kind of folded tiara with raised side lappets and a neck flap) and a broad diadem; the reverse shows the standing figure of an eagle (facing right) with closed wings.²⁴⁴ The introduction of the term, [A]ΔΑΙΑΒΗΝΟY, which may express a geographical, political or ethnic affiliation, is unprecedented in the inscriptions of the royal coinage in the Near East, and as such calls for an explanation.²⁴⁵ It has been rightly suggested that this phenomenon can be explained as a means by which Abdissar attempted to emphasize his royal prerogative to Adiabene,²⁴⁶ perhaps even to announce the introduction of monarchy in Adiabene.²⁴⁷

We know of only one coin struck on behalf of King Monobazos I.²⁴⁸ The obverse presents a bearded male bust (to the right), wearing a tiara and a diadem. Monobazos I's tiara is very tall and pointed, which makes it a classic example of (what is known as) the Armenian tiara.²⁴⁹ There is also an inscription on the obverse: ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΜΟΝΟΒΑΖΟΥ. In turn, the reverse shows a stalk of grain inside a wreath, as well as an inscription: ΕΒΑΤ.²⁵⁰ The inscription on the reverse can be interpreted as a date: 332. If the Seleucid era is used (which is preferable since the use of this era is attested in Nineveh and Ashur), this date gives the year 20/21 CE, which in turn indicates that the coin was struck on behalf of Monobazos I (and not Monobazos II).²⁵¹

The fact that at least some kings of Adiabene issued their own coinage is very telling. Hellenistic and Parthian kings issued coinage as a vehicle of propaganda in order to transmit a political message imprinted on the coins to their subjects and neighbors. First, they clearly announced their royal status by adopting the Greek title *basileus*. The message on coins which were not silver (or gold) was intended for the inhabitants of their own country and the nearest region.²⁵² Also important are the symbols presented on the coins.

244 See de Callataÿ 1996, 135–145; Grabowski 2011, 117–140.

245 De Callataÿ 1996, 140.

246 De Callataÿ 1996, 140.

247 Likewise Grabowski 2011, 133–134.

248 See Klose 1992, 82; Hendin 2001, 453–455; Tameanko 2005, 19.

249 Sayles 1999, 48; Tameanko 2005, 19.

250 Klose 1992, 82; Tameanko 2005, 19.

251 Klose 1992, 82. The Parthian era would give the year 84/85 CE. However, it is not known whether Monobazos II was still alive at that time. By contrast, we know that Monobazos I was still reigning in Adiabene in the 20s CE; therefore, Monobazos I fits our data better than Monobazos II. See Marciak 2013b.

252 It is generally accepted that only silver (and gold) coins could “travel widely” and reach other countries, due to the value of their material. The circulation of bronze or copper

The figure of a standing eagle with closed wings was the most common motif on the reverses of Ptolemaic coins; it was also used by the Seleucids, but extremely rarely: Achaïos (220–215 BCE), Seleukos IV (187–175 BCE) and Antiochos IV Epiphanes (175–164 BCE).²⁵³ Generally speaking, the image of an eagle in this context is to be understood as the symbol of victory; in particular, images of birds (including eagles) played an important role in investiture scenes on Parthian coins;²⁵⁴ and this aspect appears to be in keeping with the context of Abdissar's coinage, which may have been intended as the proclamation of monarchy in Adiabene. In turn, the motif of the wreath was very widespread in ancient coinage including Hellenistic, Roman, and Parthian coins; it is usually seen as the symbol of victory. A stalk of grain is not a common motif on Parthian coins (unlike a palm branch), and is most likely to be seen as a symbol of (agricultural) prosperity.

8.3.2 *The Coinage of Natounissarokerta and the Epigraphic Data*²⁵⁵

As far as the coinage of Natounissarokerta on the Kapros is concerned, it includes two groups—epigraphic and anepigraphic coins. We know of seven coins bearing the following inscriptions:²⁵⁶

1. NATOYN/IEΩN T[ΩN]/ΠΡΟC TΩ/ΚΑΠΡΩ (known as the London item)²⁵⁷
2. ANTOYNH/CAP[OKEPTΩN] (known as the Nisibis item no 6)²⁵⁸
3. NATOYNIC/CAPO/KEP[TΩN] (known as the Nisibis item no 7)²⁵⁹
4. NATOYNICAPOKEPTΩN (known as the Paris item)²⁶⁰

coins was much more limited, but in the Hellenistic and Parthian Near East they were also issued by Parthian and Armenian rulers and, as far as we can judge from the archaeological context, circulated wider than only in their own mint country.

253 Grabowski 2011, 132.

254 V.S. Curtis 2012, 73.

255 This chapter is a much revised version of Marciak 2013b.

256 For a discussion on the reconstruction of inscriptions on all seven items (including the pictures of items nos. 1 and 7), see Marciak 2013b.

257 Milik 1962, 51. Other readings include NAT·YNICANT·ΠP·CT·KAΠP· according to Seyrig 1955, 104–105 and NATOYNIEΩNT □ ΠΡΟC□ KAΠP· according to Le Rider 1959–60, 30. See also Head 1911, 817; Wissowa 1896, 2260; Hill 1922, CXVIII, 147 and plate no. XXIII.22.

258 Milik 1962, 51. Other readings include NI·YNIICAI (or NT·YNIIO CAI) according to Seyrig 1955, 105 and 88 and NT·YNIICAI according to Le Rider 1959–60, 30.

259 Milik 1962, 51. Other readings are IAT·YNICCAP·K according to Seyrig 1955, 88, 105 and IAT·YNICCAP·KEP according to Le Rider 1959–60, 30.

260 Le Rider 1959–60, 30; Milik 1962, 51.

5. NATOVNICA[] PO []PΩN (published in 1991 by K. Butcher)²⁶¹
6. NATOVN(P)EΩN T(ΩN ΠΡΟΣ ΤΟΝ) ΚΑΙΠΟΝ (published in the journal *Shekel* in 2011)²⁶²
7. Another recently published item from the British Museum with a partly illegible inscription where only the following letters can be distinguished with more certainty: ... ATO[N]ICAP ...²⁶³

It is evident that the phrase πρὸς τῷ Κάπρῳ (“on the Kapros”) allows us to attribute this coinage to Adiabene, as the Greek river name Kapros frequently stands for the Little Zab in ancient sources.²⁶⁴ What is more, the two items in question come from the Nisibis hoard, which was deposited in 32/31 BCE at the latest.²⁶⁵ Thus, we are able to clearly set the geographical and chronological context of this coinage: it is a bronze coinage of a city located on the Little Zab, thus within the range of political authority of the kingdom of Adiabene in the first century BCE.

However, there has been much less clarity about the toponyms mentioned in the inscriptions. Scholars have suggested two interpretations: NATOUNIA or NATOUNISSAROKERTA.²⁶⁶ The toponym Natounissarokerta is of course partially understandable, as the suffix -κερτ is a typically Iranian element meaning “made, built.” The *omicron* functions as a common Greek conjugate between the suffix and the term νατουμισσαρ.²⁶⁷ Thus, we can understand *Natounissarokerta* as a construct parallel to *Tigranokerta* and other similar names.²⁶⁸ The question remains, however, as to how to understand the element νατουμισσαρ, and what the connection is between the forms NATOUNISSAROKERTA and NATOUNIA.

In his influential paper of 1962 J.T. Milik first suggested the toponyms in question should be understood in the light of epigraphic parallels from Ka'baye Zardosht near Naqsh-e Rostam. Namely, Adiabene is listed in the inscription of the Sasanian king, Shapur I, as part of his kingdom. Thanks to the trilingual

261 Butcher 1991, 4.

262 Loeschner 2011, 20–25.

263 Marciak 2013b.

264 Weissbach 1919b, 1921; Hansman 1987, 277; Kessler 1999b, 265.

265 Seyrig 1955, 100–104; Raschke 1978, 828; Hoover 2009, 163.

266 G.M. Cohen 2013, 101–102.

267 This was recognized a long time ago by Le Rider 1959–60, 31.

268 According to *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* (online edition), toponyms ending with the suffix -kerta are very rare in Greek texts: besides *Tigranokerta* and *Arkathiokerta*, only a few examples can be quoted: Ἀρχσίκερτα, Δαδόκερτα, and *Vologasocerta*. See also Nöldeke 1879c, 143–156.

nature of the inscription we can see how the Greek toponym Ἀδιαβηνή was rendered into the Parthian and Middle-Persian languages: these forms are *ntwšrkn* and *nwthštrkn*, respectively.²⁶⁹ There is no etymological connection between the Greek Adiabene on the one hand (which most likely goes back to the Aramaic ʔdyb) and the Iranian renderings on the other hand. At the same time, the Iranian renderings are clearly related to each other.

There have been several attempts to understand the meaning of the Iranian forms.²⁷⁰ Milik sought to understand the Iranian forms in the light of his interpretation of the above-mentioned coin legends—he saw the toponym *Natunia*, the Iranian word *-sar* (meaning *country, people*), and the Iranian suffix *-ag-ān* in the disputed terms.²⁷¹ He consequently suggested the following translation: **Ntū(n)-šar-* “people (et pays) des Natouniens.”²⁷² However, the problem is that the toponym *Natounia* is otherwise unattested, its meaning is unknown, and Milik’s interpretation is based mainly on one coin legend (out of four available at that time).

Next, J. Markwart and W.B. Henning suggested a connection between the disputed terms and a personal name, *Ardashir* (belonging either to the Sasanian king *Ardashir I* or to an otherwise unattested king of Adiabene bearing this name).²⁷³ In their opinion, the disputed names contained an abbreviated form of this personal name (**nwtṛthštrkn*).²⁷⁴ However, the assumption that an abbreviation could have been used in an official and monumental inscription of *Shapur I* seems to be very unlikely; one would instead expect the full form.²⁷⁵

Finally, some scholars specializing in Armenian studies suggested a connection between the Iranian renderings and the Armenian toponym, *Norširakan* (also attested as *Nor-Širakan* or *Noširakan*).²⁷⁶ Yet the interpretation of the Armenian toponym *Norširakan*, especially its origin and territorial extent, should not be seen as clear-cut, due to the variety of its forms and the presence of other phonetically similar toponyms in Armenian sources.²⁷⁷ Namely, the Armenian toponym, especially in the form *Nor-Širakan* or *Norširakan*, is

269 Huyse 1999a, 115; Huyse 1999b, 20.

270 See Huyse 1999b, 20.

271 Milik 1962, 57.

272 Milik 1962, 57.

273 Markwart 1931, 81–82; Henning 1954, 49.

274 Henning 1954, 49.

275 Maricq 1958, 304, n. 4; Huyse 1999b, 20.

276 Hewsens 1992, 229; Garsoïan 1989, 483–484.

277 For the sake of clarity, let us stress (in contrast to Hewsens 1992, 229 and Garsoïan 1989, 483–484) that the term *Nor-Širakan* does not literally appear in the inscription of *Shapur I*. In the inscription we have Greek and Iranian forms and the latter are believed by some

believed to literally mean *New Širakan*²⁷⁸ and to have been coined after the district of *Širakan* located west of Lake Urmia (or, less likely, in connection to the northwestern Armenian district of *Širak*).²⁷⁹ Thus, the suffix *Nor-* was added in order to distinguish two districts—*Nor-Širakan*,²⁸⁰ and *Širakan*, west of Lake Urmia (both divided by the Zagros range).²⁸¹ The term *Širakan* itself (and *Širak* too) is in turn thought to be related to an ethnonym known from Greek and Latin sources: Σίρακες, and consequently to reflect the Scythian origin of this region.²⁸² How could Adiabene be named after the district *Širakan*? According to Hewsens, Adiabene (or part of it) could have been acquired by Armenia (under Artaxias I or Tigranes II the Great) immediately after the conquest of *Širakan*, and consequently took its name from the chronologically previous acquisition.²⁸³

The above-mentioned ‘classic’ explanation of the connection between the Greek *Adiabene* and the Armenian toponym *Nor-Širakan* raises certain doubts. First of all, it is hardly understandable why a country like Adiabene which had its own rulers for centuries and (memories of) statehood traditions going back to ancient Assyria (see the connection between Assyria and Adiabene in Greek and Latin sources) could have been named after a small province like *Širakan*. Secondly, Adiabene is divided from *Širakan* by a massive physical barrier—the Zagros Mountains. Thirdly, there is no evidence that Adiabene and *Širakan* ever formed together one political entity or administrative district. Fourthly, nothing tangible can be said about the Scythian origin of Adiabene.²⁸⁴

scholars to correspond to the Armenian toponym. Yet this link is an assumption that is yet to be proven.

278 Hewsens 1992, 229.

279 Hewsens 1992, 229–230.

280 Generally speaking, at some point in its Armenian history *Nor-Širakan* (*New-Širakan*) is believed to have been one of the Armenian *vitaxates*, that is “the Armenian border province” facing a non-Armenian country called *Nor-Širakan* itself. Thus, the very concept of the *vitaxas* implies that we in fact have two geopolitical entities bearing the same name—the Armenian border province (*Nor-Širakan*) and a country located outside Armenia’s borders (*Nor-Širakan*). The former could occasionally include territories wrested from the latter. Armenian *Nor-Širakan* was the easternmost of the three border provinces of southern Armenia, and is mostly understood as facing part of Adiabene (or less frequently as facing Media). See Hübschmann 1904, 319–320; Adontz, Garsoïan 1970, 175–178; Garsoïan 1989, 483–484; Hewsens 1988–89, 271–319 (esp. 299–306).

281 Toumanoff 1963, 163–166; Hewsens 1992, 229–230.

282 Messina 1937, 234–244; Maricq 1958, 304–305, n. 4; Hewsens 1992, 230. For Σίρακες, see Olbrycht 1998a, 133–136, 193–194 and Olbrycht 2001.

283 Hewsens 1992, 230.

284 This is the idea put forward by Herzfeld 1932, 41–42.

E. Lipiński paid special attention to the issues at hand in his two papers.²⁸⁵ Namely, Lipiński pointed to inscriptions from Hatra (nos. 21, 113, 114, and probably no. 40) where the form *ntwn'šr* (and *ntwn'šry'*) appears.²⁸⁶ Lipiński interpreted the form *ntwn'šr* as including two elements: a participle *ntwn*,²⁸⁷ and a divine name *'šr*.²⁸⁸ The construct has been vocalized as *Natun-'Iššar*, and accordingly been translated as “given by Ishtar,” which would be a personal name of the founder of the royal residence and of the dynasty (and *ntwn'šry'* would be an ethnicon connected with *ntwn'šr*).²⁸⁹ According to Lipiński, the Parthian and Middle-Persian forms are based on the form known Hatra—*Natun-'Iššar*, though some changes occurred in the transmission. Namely, the *n* was confused with *w* (a common mistake in Aramaic script of the Late Parthian period²⁹⁰); in turn, the Middle Persian spelling implies the same confusion of *wāw* with *nūn* and a metathesis of the letters *tn* (read as *wt*).²⁹¹ Thus, the correct spellings of the Parthian and Middle-Persian names are *Ntnšrkn* and *Natun-Hištār-kana*, respectively.²⁹² The name can be explained through parallels with other place names ended in *-kn* attested in Persepolis tablets and means “Moat of Natuniššar.” The word “moat” can also be understood in the sense “fort” and designate the fortified capital or residence, further the seat of government and the whole province or state.²⁹³ Furthermore, Lipiński holds

285 Lipiński 1982 and Lipiński 2015.

286 Lipiński 2015, 205.

287 This term was read as *ntyn* by Caquot 1952, 101 and Altheim, Stiehl 1967, 264 (who actually regard the readings, *ntyn* and *ntwn*, as equally possible), but as *ntwn* by Milik 1962, 52; Vattioni 1981, 31; Lipinski 1982, 119–120; and Beyer 1998, 33, which seems to be a more likely option.

288 Lipinski 1982, 119–120. Likewise concerning the participle Beyer 1998, 33 who, however, differs from Lipiński about the classification of the participle. Namely, according to Beyer 1998, 33, the reconstructed participle is a Cananean type (West-Semitic). This controversial classification (as it suggests a West-Semitic form in the area always dominated by East-Semitic languages) probably results from the popular opinion that the participle *qattūl* is absent in Aramaic. However, upon closer examination neither the participle *qattūl* nor the verb *ntn* is completely alien to archaic forms of Aramaic. The verb root *ntn*, though perhaps not so widespread as *yhb*, is still attested in Old and Official Aramaic. See Zadok 1977, 127–130, 135–136; Lipiński 1982, 119, n. 20. Concerning the form *'šr*, it was first H.J.W. Drijvers 1977, 824 who considered it as the personal name, but, mistakenly, as the name of the deity Assur.

289 Lipiński 2015, 205.

290 Naveh 1972, 299.

291 Lipiński 2015, 204.

292 Lipiński 2015, 205.

293 Lipiński 2015, 204.

the view that the form in question also appears in the coins inscriptions as Natounissarokerta meaning “made by Natounissar,” and the form Natounia is the abbreviated form of the city-name.²⁹⁴

It is important to turn our attention to stylistic features of the coins in question. The epigraphic items feature images of a turreted and diademed female head on the obverses (clearly to be identified as the head of the city-goddess, Tyche), and images of a palm branch and a spear (or an arrow) on the reverses. In turn, anepigraphic items are associated with the epigraphic coins (which can be unambiguously identified because of the inscriptions) on stylistic grounds (similar images and a very distinctive element of a wreath border).²⁹⁵ Two groups of images can be distinguished on anepigraphic items: the first group features a bust of Tyche and a bearded male bust (in some cases clearly to be identified as Zeus); the second group shows images of a radiant male head (beardless) and a dromedary with or without a rider.²⁹⁶ The figures have been suggested to be the (well known from Palmyra and Hatra) sun god Shamash and the god of the evening star Arsu, respectively.²⁹⁷

The stylistic features of the Natounissarokerta coins are highly interesting. On the one hand, they feature images of the city-goddess Tyche which were very popular in the Hellenistic, but also Parthian Near East, especially in the coinage closely associated with the city mint (like Seleucia on the Tigris). The images of Zeus also belong to motifs with deep roots in Hellenistic art. On the other hand, images of dromedaries and of radiant divine figures (likely the divine figures of Arsu and Shamash respectively) point to cultural affiliations of Adiabene (especially its southern [south of the Little Zab] and western [west of the Tigris] parts) with the nomadic cultures of Mesopotamia, whose most striking expression was in the extant monuments of Hatra.

8.4 The Adiabene Onomasticon

The aim of this chapter is to analyze the extant corpus of names from Adiabene, both toponyms and anthroponyms. This task will be undertaken in

294 Lipiński 2015, 203.

295 Hoover 2009, 163: “the leaves are so thin and spindly as to look more like pine needles than the laurel most commonly used for coin borders in the Hellenistic period.”

296 Marciak 2013b.

297 Seyrig 1955, 105–108. See Kaizer 2002, 85, 56–57, 99–100, 107–108, 154–157 (Shamash in Palmyra), 116–124 (Arsu in Palmyra); H.J.W. Drijvers 1976, 240–249, esp. 243 (Shamash in Palmyra and Hatra); Tubach 1986, 255–266, 286–290 (Shamash in Hatra).

two consecutive steps. First the onomasticon from the Hellenistic, Parthian and early-Sasanian periods will be analyzed (until the middle of the third century CE); next, the data from the rest of the Sasanian period (fourth until early sixth century CE) will be included. The reason for this distinction results from the fact that the character of data after the early-Sasanian period changes considerably—our evidence is mainly based on Syriac sources of ecclesiastical origin.

8.4.1 *Toponyms*

As far as toponyms are concerned, we will analyze place-names which are mentioned in ancient sources as located in Adiabene. This analysis will also include terms used to name the country itself.

The most well-known name for the country under examination is recorded in Greek as Ἀδιαβηνή, but this name does not appear to be Greek in origin. It has no meaning as a Greek lexeme (despite Ammianus' attempt to understand it as a derivation of the verb διαβαίνειν—see below), and it bears a typically Greek suffix—ηνή (or—ανή), frequently added by the Greeks when Grecizing Oriental names.²⁹⁸ The name Ἀδιαβηνή bears similarity to an Aramaic name used for Adiabene in Aramaic (and Syriac) sources: Ḥadyab (attested also in the Talmud in various spellings such as הדייב, חדייב, or הדייף).²⁹⁹ It seems that the two forms are related, and it is more likely that Adiabene was coined after Ḥadyab³⁰⁰ (than vice versa) for historical and linguistic reasons: this area has traditionally been dominated by Semitic languages, and dropping the initial guttural ḥ in Oriental names was a common phenomenon for Greek-speakers (while adding it to a Semitic name without the initial guttural would have been phonetically inconvenient).³⁰¹ Unfortunately, the meaning of the Aramaic Ḥadyab is unclear. It has been suggested that it may be connected with the name of the local rivers, the Great and Little Zabs³⁰² (especially through the Aramaic version: dī'b³⁰³) or, less likely, with the place name Zabban (located on the Diyala) known from Assyrian itineraries.³⁰⁴

298 Sellwood 1985, 456; Huyse 1999b, 20.

299 See Gottheil 1901, 191; Sokoloff 2002, 342.

300 Boettger 1879, 11–12; Fraenkel 1893, 360; Sellwood 1985, 456; Huyse 1993, 97; Oelsner 1996, 112; Huyse 1999b, 20.

301 Marciak 2014a, 195.

302 Delitzsch 1887, 131–132.

303 For the Aramaic term, see Lipiński 1999, 21–25, esp. 23; for the identification, see M. Streck 1912, 1660; Weissbach 1919, 1921; Swoboda 1919, 1921–1922; LSJ 1064–65.

304 See Marciak 2011, 197.

Another enigmatic name used for (the population of) Adiabene is *Sakkopodes* (Σακκόποδες), which appears in Strabo *Geog.* 16.1.19. This term literally means “sack feet”.³⁰⁵ However, the problem is that this name is not attested elsewhere, and as a result a textual corruption cannot be excluded.³⁰⁶ Claudius Salmasius related this name to Ammianus’ etymology of the name Adiabene [α—διαβαίνειν = not being able to cross the rivers at a ford] and suggested that the name *Sakkopodes* alludes to Adiabene’s peculiar location between two impassible rivers: the Adiabeni are sack feet, that is, they move as if they had their legs inside a sack, because they cannot cross the Zabs at a ford.³⁰⁷ However, the reading is unclear, and Ammianus’ etymology bears all the hallmarks of a *Volksetymologie* and as such cannot be used to explain another unknown term.³⁰⁸

What is more, Adiabene is also called Assyria (*Assyria*, Ἀσσυρία) in Latin and Greek sources (Plin. *HN* 5.6; 6.42; *Geogr.* 6.1.1–7; Cass. Dio 68.26.1–4; Amm. Marc. 23.6.20). This connection may have a geographical dimension (Adiabene as one of the Assyrian regions), but is also put forward (by Pliny the Elder, Ammianus, and Cassius Dio) with regard to the name itself: Adiabene was formerly called Assyria (e.g. Pliny the Elder *HN* 5.67: “Adiabene Assyria ante dicta”). Linguistically, there is no link whatsoever between the two names. This connection must have arisen for historical reasons—the kingdom of Adiabene controlled areas (especially Nineveh and Ashur) which once belonged to the Assyrian Empire, and so a Hellenistic-Parthian-Sasanian *regnum minus* could inherit a Greek-Latin appellation of the once glorious Assyrian kingdom.³⁰⁹

Another Oriental name for Adiabene may be revealed through the trilingual inscription of the Sasanian king, Shapur I, where the Greek toponym was rendered as *ntwšrkn* and *nwthštrkn* in the Parthian and Middle-Persian languages respectively.³¹⁰ There does not seem to be any etymological connection between the Greek form and the Iranian renderings; at the same time, the Iranian forms are clearly akin to each other. There have been several attempts to understand their meaning, most of which are not entirely convincing. Namely,

305 H.L. Jones 1930, 224–225, n. 2.

306 Kramer 1852, 293 calls this term “suspicious”, and Meineke 1877, 1039 removes it from his edition. In turn, Groskurd 1834, 398 suggests reading *Saulopodes* (meaning “delicate walkers”). This name is also historically incomprehensible. See also H.L. Jones 1930, 224, n. 1; 225, n. 2.

307 Salmasius 1689, 662–663.

308 Huyse 1999b, 20.

309 Marciak 2014a, 194–195.

310 Huyse 1999a, 115; Huyse 1999b, 20.

scholars suggested the following words as underlying the Iranian *ntwšrkšn* and *nwtḥštrkn*: the toponym *Natunia* (plus the Iranian word *-sar* [meaning “country,” “people”], and the Iranian suffix *-ag-ān*);³¹¹ the personal name, Ardahir;³¹² the ethnonym Σίρακες;³¹³ and finally the Armenian toponym *Norširakan* (also attested as *Nor-Širakan* or *Noširakan* meaning *New Širakan*; Širakan was an Armenian province located west of Lake Urmia).³¹⁴ However, it appears that an ancient ethnonym/toponym, which is most parallel to the Iranian rendering of the Greek Adiabene, can be found in Hatra inscriptions nos. 21, (probably) 40, 113, and 114 where the term *ntwnšr* appears.³¹⁵ This term should be understood as meaning “given by Ishtar” (*Natun-Iššar*, that is, *natur* as an archaic-Aramaic participle, *ššr* as a proper name of the goddess Ishtar).³¹⁶ According to Lipiński, this term was primarily a personal name of the founder of the royal residence and of the dynasty, and appears in Hatra inscriptions nos. 40, 113 and 114 as a personal name denoting the grandfather of the ancestor of the donor.³¹⁷ However, the Iranian names end in *-kn* which means “moat” or “fort” and can refer to the fortified capital or residence, and even further to the seat of government or the whole province or state.³¹⁸ Thus, according to Lipiński, at some point the government seat in Adiabene (Ḥadyab) got a new name in Parthian, namely “Moat of Natuniššar.” This name was also used to designate the country known to the Sasanians as Adiabene in Greek.³¹⁹

311 Milik 1962, 57. The problem is that the toponym is not attested elsewhere, and its meaning is also unknown.

312 Markwart 1931, 81–82; Henning 1954, 49. The use of an abbreviated form of the king's name (**nwtḥštrkn*) in an official and monumental inscription is unlikely.

313 Messina 1937, 234–244; Maricq 1958, 304–305, n. 4. However, the linguistic correspondence is not close, and, historically speaking, nothing tangible can be said about the Scythian origin of Adiabene (which is implied by this etymology—see Herzfeld 1932, 41–42). For Σίρακες, see Olbrycht 1998a, 133–136, 193–194.

314 Hewsen 1992, 229; Garsoïan 1989, 483–484. Adiabene and Širakan are divided by the Zagros Mountains, and, as far as is known from the historical record, have never formed one geopolitical entity together. Marciak 2013b tentatively suggests that the Armenian name resulted from a *Volksetymologie*: *ntwšrkšn* is in fact derived from *Nattūn-Iššar*, but Armenian speakers no longer understood *ntwšrkšn* in its original context, and because to them it sounded similar to Širakan, they associated it with the name of this province (and added a distinguishing epithet—“Nor,” “New”).

315 Milik 1962, 52; Vattioni 1981, 31; Beyer 1998, 33. Read also as *ntyn'šry'* by Caquot 1952, 101; Altheim, Stiehl 1967, 264 (who consider both readings as possible).

316 Lipiński 1982, 119; Marciak 2014a, 220.

317 Lipiński 2015, 205.

318 Lipiński 2015, 204.

319 Lipiński 2015, 205.

When it comes to the names of the three main cities located in the territory of Adiabene—Arbela, Nineveh, Ashur—only two of them are mentioned in ancient Greek and Latin sources: Arbela and Nineveh.

The name of the city Arbela is known from many languages under variant forms:³²⁰ Akkadian Arbailu, Old Persian Arbairā, Greek Arbēla, Jewish Arabic Arbīl or Arwīl, Classical Arabic Irbīl, Kurdish Hawlēr, locally Erbel.³²¹ It is easy to recognize that all these forms have a common base which in fact goes back to a non-Semitic (possibly Hurrian) form Arbīlum/Urbi-lum, attested as far back as the third millennium BCE; in the Akkadian language this form was rendered by a *Volksetymologie* as “arba-ilu” to mean “four gods”.³²² Nineveh presents a similar case: variant names transmitted in ancient languages (in the times of Ur III—Ni-nu-a, Old Babylonian Ni-nu-wa-a, Assyrian Ni-nu-a, Greek Νῆνος, Νινεύη, Νινευι, Latin *Ninus*)³²³ attest to a great deal of continuity of the local nomenclature.³²⁴ All in all, both cases suggest a great deal of local onomastic continuity in this area.³²⁵ In turn, the name of the city Ashur (its occupation during the Hellenistic and Parthian times is attested in archaeological sources)

320 Interestingly, this name also received its own *interpretatio graeca*; Strabo (*Geog.* 16.1.3–4) recalls the tradition that the name of Arbela comes from a Greek named Arbelos (who apparently had his origins in Athens)—see Marciak 2014a, 179. Likewise, in reporting on the Roman-Persian expedition under Khusro II in 590 CE, Theoph. Sim. 5.7.10 refers to Arbela as *Alexandriana* (and mentions the capture of the city by Alexander the Great). See Mi. Whitby, Ma. Whitby 1997, 142, n. 31. By contrast, Dillemann 1962, 160, n. 3; Schreiner 1985, 312, n. 717; and Luther 2015, 278 and 279, n. 11 appear to interpret *Alexandriana* as a location separate from Arbela. The connection between Pliny the Elder's references (HN 6.16) and Theophylact's *Alexandriana* (Dillemann, 1962, 160, n. 3; Schreiner, 1985, 312, n. 717) does not appear to be suitable, as Pliny the Elder explicitly locates his Alexandria in Mygdonia (the region of Nisibis), while Theophylact places *Alexandriana* after the crossing of the Great Zab. Furthermore, the connection with Alexander the Great's final success against the Achaemenids is a strong premise for equating *Alexandriana* with Arbela. In turn, a joint Roman-Persian army in 591 CE is said to have reached *Alexandriana* from the Great Zab in four days, but the speed of this army (before reaching the Little Zab) has generally been interpreted as very slow for tactical purposes; see Howard-Johnston 1999b, 172: “slowly” and “at a slow and deliberate pace.” See also G.M. Cohen 2013, 55–56, 93.

321 Hansmann 1987; Khan 1999, 2.

322 Khan 1999, 2 and n. 2.

323 Reade 1998–2001, 389.

324 The etymology of the Assyrian *Ninua* is very unclear. Connections with a fish, house or place of fish, or the goddess Ishtar (with a fish as one of her symbols) have been suggested. See Feldman 1998, 412, n. 31.

325 However, there is also the question of Xenophon's terminology used for Ashur and Nineveh. Most likely, he calls them Larisa and Mespila respectively. There is no fully

appears only in Syriac sources as *ʿtwr* (the earliest attestation in the *Acts of the Martyrs*—AMS 2.244.5, 2.241.9).³²⁶

Other major settlements mentioned in Greek and Latin sources are known to us only by name. First, Demetrias is recalled in *Geog.* 16.1.4 as Δημητριάς, clearly a Greek name, and it is called a *polis* by Strabo. It follows that Demetrias must have been a Greek city, founded in the mid-second century BCE by a Seleucid king—either Demetrios I Soter or Demetrios II Nikator.³²⁷ However, the site of Demetrias is not identified, although it appears that it may have been located between modern Arbela and Kirkuk (e.g., modern Baba Gurgur near Kirkuk has been put forward as a suggestion).³²⁸ In turn, two other sites mentioned in Greek sources are Dolba (Δόλβα) and the “island of Hēphaistos” (Ἡφαίστου νῆσος).³²⁹ Both places are briefly mentioned by Arrian (*Parth.* 12–13)³³⁰ (see Steph. Byz. ad loc.). The island of Hēphaistos in Adiabene is not attested otherwise, in turn, Dolba is called a *polis*, and may correspond to the region Dolomene (apparently named after the city) known from Strabo (*Geog.* 16.1.1., but its location is unknown).³³¹ The name Dolba has been suggested to be Semitic in origin—*dolbā* meaning “Platane.”³³² The name “island of Hēphaistos” is a Greek name, but it is clearly an *interpretatio graeca* (see Philostr. *Vita Apol.* 5.16); this name has been used by the Greeks for volcano-like locations (Hēphaistos was particularly connected to Mt. Etna on Sicily³³³). Thus, the “island of Hēphaistos” was most likely a local Semitic settlement. Neither of these two locations has been identified so far.

convincing explanation for this terminology. For a (possibly) full list of explanations, see Marciak 2012b, 176–178.

326 Herzfeld 1907, 231–238 suggests that Ashur appears as *Libbana* in Ptolemy (also as *Libba* in Polybios and *Sabbīn* in the Peutinger Table). This identification appears to be frequently quoted, but is in fact highly disputed for geographical reasons (see Lepper 1948, 116–117 and Hauser 2011, 145–147, esp. 147, who writes: “möchte ich annehmen, dass der Name der Stadt Assur ebenso wie der Kult ihres Gottes bis in die Arsakidenzeit überlebt hat”). Indeed, the native name of the city of Ashur is preserved in Syriac sources: *ʿtwr* is first mentioned by the *Acts of the Martyrs* (AMS 2.244.5, 2.241.9), and later by the *Legend of Mar Qardagh*, *Mār Māri*, and the *History of Karkā de Beth Selōk*. See C. Jullien 2004, 145.

327 Marciak 2014a, 178–179.

328 Hoffman 1880, 273; Marciak 2014a, 175.

329 Luther 2015, 279, n. 11.

330 Roos 1967, 230.

331 Marciak 2014a, 175.

332 M. Streck 1945, 1275.

333 Burkert 1985, 167–168; March 2014, 230–232.

Importantly, several toponyms unknown to the Classical literature³³⁴ can be found in extant Syriac Christian sources.³³⁵ First of all, in the Syriac sources we hear of several districts within the larger area of Adiabene: Beth Nūhadrā (AMS 2.365.15, 2.391.5: *byt nwhdr'*), located along the eastern bank of the Tigris from Nineveh to the Cudi Daḡi;³³⁶ Ma'alta (AMS 2.521.20; 2.531.8), located north of Beth Nūhadrā along the middle course of the Gomel River;³³⁷ Beth Dāsen (*byt dsn* attested in the *Synodicon*) on the right bank of the Great Zab southeast of Beth Bḡāš;³³⁸ Beth Bḡāš (*Legend of Mar Qardagh* 17.12, 37.5–6: *byt bḡš*), on the left bank of the upper course of the Great Zab in northeastern Adiabene;³³⁹ Ramōnīn (*rmwnyn*, see the *Synodicon*) in the mountainous area northeast of Arbela;³⁴⁰ and Dabarinos (*dbryn'*, the *Synodicon*), the location of which is uncertain.³⁴¹

Furthermore, the Syriac sources also inform us of many towns and villages in Adiabene:³⁴² Bdīgar (AMS 4.128.12: *bdygr*), a fortress in Adiabene;³⁴³ Bekaša(z)

334 The main cities—Arbela, Nineveh, and Ashur—are also referred to as *ʿrbyl* (e.g. AMS 2.314.5), *nynw'* (AMS 2.507.9), and *ʿtwr* (e.g. AMS 2.507.3) respectively. See C. Jullien 2004, 144–145, 160. Likewise are the names of the regions Adiabene (e.g. AMS 2.378.4: *hdyb*) and Assyria (e.g. AMS 2.507.7: *ʿtwry'*). See C. Jullien 2004, 143, 145. The exhaustive collection of the onomastic data from Syriac sources has been published by C. Jullien 2004.

335 C. Jullien 2009; C. Jullien 2010; C. Jullien, F. Jullien 2001. It should however be noted that chapter 8.4.1. is focused on toponyms attested in the *Acts of Martyrs*, the *Synodicon*, and the *Legend of Mar Qardagh* as relatively reliable sources whose narrative settings cover the Sasanian period and are of direct importance to the region of Adiabene. The Syriac sources—the *Book of Chastity* and the *Acts of Mari the Apostle* (as well as several others)—are much later sources. For all toponyms in these two Syriac works (and many others), see C. Jullien 2009; C. Jullien 2010; and C. Jullien, F. Jullien 2001.

336 Fiey 1965, 321–353; Morony 1982, 14; C. Jullien 2004, 149–150. For Beth Nūhadrā in the *Synodicon*, see Chabot 1902, 273–274, 287, 315, 423, 478.

337 Fiey 1965, 675–680; Morony 1982, 14; C. Jullien 2004, 158. For Ma'alta in the *Synodicon*, see Chabot 1902, 310–311, 316, 344–345, 350–351, 368, 423, 479. It should be noted that Marga (etym. “la prairie”, see C. Jullien 2004, 159), another district between Beth Nūhadrā and Ma'alta, is referenced as a Christian bishopric only in AD 790.

338 Morony 1982, 14; C. Jullien 2004, 152. For Beth Dāsen in the *Synodicon*, see Chabot 1902, 273–274, 285, 316, 368, 479.

339 Morony 1982, 14; C. Jullien 2004, 147. For Beth Bḡāš in the *Synodicon*, see Chabot 1902, 273–274, 285, 307, 316, 344–345, 350–351, 423, 478.

340 C. Jullien 2004, 151; Morony 1982, 12–13. For Ramōnīn in the *Synodicon*, see Chabot 1902, 273.

341 See C. Jullien 2004. The reading Dabarinos is uncertain, an emendation to Rabarinhḡesn has been suggested. See Chabot 1902, 273, 670–671.

342 For the other later Syriac sources, see also C. Jullien 2009; C. Jullien 2010.

343 C. Jullien 2004, 146.

(AMS 2.308.6: *bksʿ*), a village belonging to the Christian apostate priest, Paul;³⁴⁴ Beth Ḥasys (AMS 2.286.16: *byt ḥṣys*), a village under the jurisdiction of King Ardashir II;³⁴⁵ Beth Katūbā (AMS 2.365.11: *byt ktwbʿ*);³⁴⁶ Beth Tabaḥā (AMS 2.387.5: *byt ṭbhʿ*);³⁴⁷ Dabr xvatarān (Mar Qard. 51.4: *dbr ḥwtwn*);³⁴⁸ Dastgird (AMS 2.391.6, AMS 2.317.4: *dstgrr/dstqrtʿ*), a village in Beth Nūhadrā;³⁴⁹ Ḥebtun (Mar Qard. 41.2: *ḥbtwn*), a bishopric in Adiabene;³⁵⁰ Ḥnaitā (AMS 2.362.6);³⁵¹ Melqi (Mar Qard. 20.5, 59.8, 81.13: *mlqy*); Tell Dārā (AMS 2.307: *tldrʿ*); Tell Šalilā (AMS 2.307.5: *tʿ šlylʿ*);³⁵² and, most importantly, Ḥazza (AMS 2.308.12; AMS 2.315.5: *ḥzʿ*),³⁵³ a village located 12 km southwest of Arbela which is mentioned several times in the *Acts of the Martyrs*, and which, in light of the early Muslim chronicles, rose to the role of the main administrative center of Adiabene at the very end of the Sasanian period.³⁵⁴

It is generally held that during the Sasanian period, Adiabene belonged to the world of Syriac culture, and that consequently most toponyms in Syriac sources are supposedly Semitic in origin, while Iranian toponyms appear only occasionally.³⁵⁵ This appears to be correct in general, but, in fact, in only a few cases can we be relatively certain about their etymologies. In the case of possible Semitic etymologies, Maʿalta (*mʿltʿ*) has been suggested to mean “l’entrée”,³⁵⁶ Beth Katūbā (*byt ktwbʿ*) clearly means “la maison du scribe”;³⁵⁷ Beth Tabaḥā (*byt ṭbhʿ*) has been explained as “la maison du boucher”/“la boucherie,” though it may also be of Iranian origin, as it contains the Middle-Persian term tabāh, which would consequently translate to “maison en ruine” or “lieu ruiné.”³⁵⁸ In turn, Iranian origins have also been suggested for Bdīgar, Beth Māhkard, and Dabr xvatarān. Namely, Bdīgar (*bdygr*) may be connected to the Middle-Persian

344 C. Jullien 2004, 146.

345 C. Jullien 2004, 148.

346 C. Jullien 2004, 148.

347 C. Jullien 2004, 149.

348 C. Jullien 2004, 151 [sic!].

349 C. Jullien 2004, 152.

350 C. Jullien 2004, 155.

351 C. Jullien 2004, 155.

352 C. Jullien 2004, 164.

353 C. Jullien 2004, 154.

354 Morony 1982, 10–11; Morony 1984, 132.

355 Fiey 1965, 821–827; Luther 2015.

356 C. Jullien 2004, 158.

357 Peeters 1925, 291; C. Jullien 2004, 148.

358 C. Jullien 2004, 150.

pat-i gar and mean “chef de la montagne”;³⁵⁹ *Bet Māhkard* (*byt mhqrt*) most likely means “fait par Māh”;³⁶⁰ while *Dabr xvatarān* (*dbr ḫwtwn*) clearly consists of two Middle-Persian terms *dabr* and *xvatarān*, and consequently translates as “le champ de Seigneur.”³⁶¹

To summarize, the general impression arising from an analysis of the extant toponyms in Adiabene is that of a great deal of continuity within the local nomenclature. Generally speaking, it appears that most names are Semitic in origin, while at the same time, two other linguistic groups of toponyms are evident—a large grouping of Iranian names and a small grouping of Greek names. It appears that the existence of both non-Semitic onomastic groups reflects the influence of two political and cultural phenomena: the spread of Greek-Hellenistic culture (especially during the Seleucid period) and Iranian political dominance over Adiabene lasting from the second century BCE until the seventh century CE.

8.4.2 *Anthroponyms in Hellenistic, Parthian, and Early-Sasanian Times*

Concerning anthroponyms from Adiabene, we shall start with personal names belonging to the dynasty of royal converts from Adiabene.

Monobazos is a name borne by three individuals: Monobazos I, king of Adiabene and husband of Queen Helena; Monobazos II, their eldest son; and a certain Monobazos, a συγγενής of Monobazos II. This name is widely regarded as being of Iranian origin;³⁶² however, its etymology is not entirely clear, and various suggestions have been put forward. According to Justi, it can be understood in the light of Avesta (*mana* as a pony and *vāza* as “vehens et vectus”) and consequently translates as “mit Ponies fahrend.”³⁶³ However, this explanation has been widely rejected, as the term *mana* does not really appear in Iranian languages in this meaning.³⁶⁴ By contrast, Markwart (followed by Hinz) sees Monobazos as a parallel construct to Τειρίβαζος (understood as “Tīri—bāzu”: “mit einem Arm wie Tīri ausgestattet”) and consequently translates it as “mit einem Arm wie Manu ausgestattet.”³⁶⁵ In turn, according to N. Garsoïan, the

359 Peeters 1925, 268, n. 1, but this etymology has been called in question. See C. Jullien 2004, 146.

360 C. Jullien 2004, 149.

361 C. Jullien 2004, 151.

362 Justi 1895, 189; Frenschkowski 1990, 217–218; Ilan 2002, 352. It is also attested in Rabbinic literature as מִנְבָּז and in the Ashur inscriptions as Manabaz. See Jastrow 1975, 744; Aggoula 1985, 34–35 (no. 12) and Beyer 1998, 13 (no. 12).

363 Justi 1895, 518.

364 Frenschkowski 1990, 218.

365 Markwart 1903, 287; Hinz 1975, 66.

form *mana-vāzā could have the meaning of “progressing through the spirit.”³⁶⁶ Lastly, A. de Jong suggests that this name is derived from two Iranian words: *mana* and *vazdah* (that is, the god (Vohu) Manah and *permanence*).³⁶⁷

The nickname borne by Monobazos I, *Bazaios* (Βαζαῖος)³⁶⁸ is likewise considered to be of Iranian origin, and it has been suggested that its etymology goes back to the Iranian *bāz* (*falcon*)³⁶⁹ or *bāzā* (*arm*).³⁷⁰

We know of two Adiabene kings named *Izates*: Izates I, father of Monobazos I, and Izates II, a famous convert. This name is also widely considered to be of Iranian origin; most scholars point to the Iranian root *yazata*, meaning *genius*, *a godly being* or simply *god*.³⁷¹ This root *yazd-* is attested in many Middle-Persian names.³⁷² According to A. de Jong, two problems arise with regard to this widely accepted interpretation, however: first, all parallel attestations use a hypocoristic form of the root, and second, this interpretation implies that an Iranian could be called *god*.³⁷³ In A. de Jong’s opinion, the name could be derived from the Iranian word *zātai*, meaning *born* (like a Middle-Persian name *Wehzād*, *well-born*), and perhaps this meaning underlies the story about Izates II’s miraculous birth in *Ant.* 20.18–19.³⁷⁴ Alternatively, one could point to the adjective ’āza, ’azāyi meaning *free*, *freed* (Neo-Aramaic dialects from the seventeenth century CE Iraqi Kurdistan³⁷⁵) or to the root 𐭠𐭣𐭥𐭩 meaning *assured*, *proclaimed* (attested in Dan 2.5,8, but considered as a Persian loanword in the

366 Garsoïan 1989, 387. I owe this reference to Kettenhofen 2015, n. 51.

367 A. de Jong, personal communication, February 21, 2012. For (Vohu) Manah, see de Jong 1997, 152–153, n. 127; for *vazdah*, see R. Schmitt 2011b, 99.

368 It is perhaps the lack of a fully convincing etymology which led Tubach 1986, 13, n. 41 to suggest an emendation in *Ant.* 20.18: Βαγαῖος in place of Βαζαῖος. The former is indeed a well-attested name (see R. Schmitt 2011b, 152–153), but Josephus’ text is not corrupted (see Niese 1890, 279) and there is no good explanation as to how *zeta* could be confused with *gamma* by a copyist.

369 Justi 1895, 66, 488–489; Frenschkowski 1990, 217. There is a similar name, Bāzag, attested in the middle-Persian, which is also believed to go back to *bāz* (*falcon*). See Gignoux 1986, 58 (no. 204).

370 MacKenzie 1971, 18.

371 Justi 1895, 145–146; Bartholomae 1904, 1279; Frenschkowski 1990, 216; Luther 2015, 278, n. 8.

372 Gignoux 2003, 68–69. It is also attested in the Syrian transmission as Īzad (Gignoux, C. Jullien, F. Jullien 2009, 88–89).

373 de Jong 2004, 56, n. 34.

374 de Jong 2004, 56, n. 34.

375 Sabar 2002, 88.

Aramaic vocabulary of the Biblical book of Daniel).³⁷⁶ Finally, the connection to the Parthian 'z't (meaning *noble*)³⁷⁷ should also be taken into account.³⁷⁸

The name *Kenedaios*, a συγγενής of Monobazos II, has also been suggested as being Iranian in origin. Namely, Jastrow and Ilan point to כְּנַדָּי, meaning a *gown* (or a *pitcher*, a *pot*) attested in Rabbinic literature, and regard it as a Persian loanword in Aramaic.³⁷⁹ However, this name may be related to the Nabatean כְּנַדָּי;³⁸⁰ furthermore, we also have good parallels from Egyptian papyri: Κένδεος,³⁸¹ Κανδαίος,³⁸² Κενδέας,³⁸³ which may call into question its Iranian background.

The only two female members of the Adiabene royalty known to us from literary sources are Queen *Helena* and *Grapte*, a συγγενής of Izates II and owner of a palace in Jerusalem. Helena is of course a quintessentially Greek name.³⁸⁴ In turn, Grapte is a very rare Greek name:³⁸⁵ it is attested in two inscriptions from Asia Minor (Tchepni in ancient Pontos,³⁸⁶ and on the coastline of Kilikia between Korykos and Elaiussa-Sebaste³⁸⁷), in the Christian writing *Shepherd of Hermas* (*Hermas* 2.4.3),³⁸⁸ and in two Jewish papyri from the Judean desert (the archive of Salome Grapte).³⁸⁹

Additionally, another royal female name, most likely belonging to the royalty of Adiabene, is engraved on the famous sarcophagus no. 5029 found in *Le Tombeau des Rois* by F. de Saulcy³⁹⁰—צדן (in the upper line) and צדה (in the lower line).³⁹¹ According to E. Lipiński, the names in question derive from the same root as the Akkadian *šuddû*, “to supply with food,” and may

376 Marciak 2014a, 228 (who relies on M. Tomal's personal communication).

377 Gignoux 1972, 48; Gignoux 1986, 51–52 (nos. 160–165).

378 Kettenhofen 2015, 302.

379 Jastrow 1975, 648; Ilan 2002, 435.

380 Negev 1991, 58 (no. 1034).

381 Pape, Benseler 1911, 645.

382 Littmann, Preisigke 1922, 164.

383 Foraboschi 1967, 163.

384 Ilan 2002, 317–318.

385 Bauer, K.Aland, B.Aland 1988, 331.

386 de Jerphanion 1921, 3–4 (no. 3).

387 Keil, Wilhelm, Herzfeld 1931, 226 (no. 794).

388 Osiek 1999, 58; Madigan, Osiek 2005, 25–26.

389 Cotton, Yardeni 1997, 160–161.

390 For the discussion of the archaeological and historical context (including the identification), see Marciak 2014a, 139–162.

391 The latest edition is CIIP 2010, 165–167 (no. 123). The two-line inscription reads: צדן מלכתא (in the upper line, trans.: šdn mlkt') and צדה מלכתא (in the lower line, trans.: šdh mlkth). In Marciak 2014a, 153 there are two editorial spelling mistakes (*final kaf* instead of *final*

be translated as *nurse* (the vocalization would be *Ṣiddān* and, as referenced in Greek inscriptions from the Damascus area and Dura-Europus, Σαδδα / Σαδα).³⁹²

We know by name four kings of Adiabene in the Parthian period who reigned before or after the dynasty of royal converts: Abdissar, Artaxares, Mebarsapes, and *ṭhw*.

There can be no doubt that *Abdissar*[]³⁹³ is a Semitic name meaning *servant of Ishtar* (attested in the Akkadian in Nippur, Greek inscriptions from Syria and Transjordan, as well as in Hatra).³⁹⁴ Next, *Artaxares* (the Latin form preserved in *Res Gestae Divi Augusti* 32) is clearly derived from the Iranian root *Rtaxšara.³⁹⁵

In turn, Justi suggested that the name Mebarsapes (Μηβαρσάπης), king of Adiabene at the time of Trajan's conquest, is Iranian in origin, but no explanation for its meaning has ever been offered, and as a result the issue of its provenance must remain open.³⁹⁶

Finally, the name from Hatra *ṭhw* has been interpreted in two different ways: as either a genuine Arabic name (the group *afʿal*) based on the root *ʾaṭala* ("to be of noble origin")³⁹⁷ or the Aramaic rendering of the Greek name Ἀτταλος.³⁹⁸

Lastly, it should also be noted that the Parthian and Middle-Persian names of Adiabene, *Ntnšrkn* and *Natun-Hištar-kana*, point to another personal name of royal background (and Semitic in origin), *Natuniššar*,³⁹⁹ regardless of whether or not we may speak about a historical figure or perhaps only an eponym being a mythological ancestor.

The only non-royal individual from Adiabene known to us from Josephus is *Chagiras*, son of Nabataios. This name is recorded by Josephus in Greek, but

nun in the upper line, and *het* instead of *tav* in the lower line). However, the spelling of the terms is correct in Marciak 2014a, pp. 154–155 (šdn) and p. 162 (mlkt’).

392 Lipiński 2015, 202. For several older attempts at explaining the names' origin and meaning, see Marciak 2014a, 154–155.

393 The coin legends use the genitive: 'Abdissarou. De Callatay 1996 restores the nominative as Abdissares, but Lipiński 1982, 118–119 as Abdissaros. Both forms are possible.

394 Lipiński 1982. Justi's attempt (see Justi 1895, 1) to identify this name as Iranian is wholly erroneous.

395 R. Schmitt 2009, 49; R. Schmitt 2011b, 124.

396 Justi 1895, 202.

397 Caquot 1952, 101; Altheim, Stiehl 1965, 227, n. 2; Beyer 1998, 33; Marciak 2014a, 230; Kettenhofen 2015, 302, n. 46.

398 Milik 1962, 53; Lipiński 2015, 205.

399 Lipiński 2015, 205.

the text conveys a pun: Chagiras (Χαγίρας⁴⁰⁰) is said to mean *lame* (χωλός), but this is the meaning of the Aramaic חגר (likewise in the Amoraic חגר⁴⁰¹ the Arabic حגר⁴⁰² the Nabatean חגירו⁴⁰³ the Palmyran חגור⁴⁰⁴). There can therefore be no doubt that this name is of Semitic origin.

In turn, the name Ναβαταῖος is used in the Biblical tradition (Gen 25.13: Ναβαῖωθ) to refer to someone of Arabic ethnic provenance.⁴⁰⁵ It has been suggested that *Nabataios* is no personal name, but simply means “Nabatean.”⁴⁰⁶

Two personal names of individuals from Adiabene also appears in Talmudic literature: Jacob Hadyaba (*BT Baba Batra* 26b)⁴⁰⁷ and (only possibly) Mār ʿUqba (*PT Soṭah* 4, 3 (4)).⁴⁰⁸ The first name is of course a well-known biblical Semitic name; according to Altheim and Stiehl, the name ʿUqba it is of Arabic origin,⁴⁰⁹ to be more precise, as Lipiński suggested, it is a well-attested Šafaitic (North-Arabian) name.⁴¹⁰

The Hatra inscriptions revealed two other personal names of individuals connected with Adiabene (=ntwnʿšry): *ʾAlkūd* (or *ʾAlkūr*) and *ʾUstānaq* (inscriptions nos. 113 and 114 respectively). Both names are regarded by K. Beyer as Iranian in origin.⁴¹¹

As for the Sasanian period, the trilingual inscription of the Sasanian king, Shapur I, mentions an *Ardashir* as king of Adiabene.⁴¹² This name is clearly Iranian (going back to Old Iranian *Rtaxšira), and was borne by the founder of the Sasanian Empire.⁴¹³

400 Different readings are possible: Χαγείρας, Ἀγίρας, and Ἀγήρας. See Thackeray 1928, 348, n. 2. See also Michel, Bauernfeind 1963, 185, n. 270.

401 Kosovsky 1984, 503.

402 Harding 1971, 177.

403 Negev 1991, 27, no. 415.

404 J.K. Stark 1971, 87.

405 Ilan 2002, 196.

406 Lipiński 2015, 205.

407 Oppenheimer 1983, 22.

408 Altheim, Stiehl 1965, 69; Oppenheimer 1983, 38–39.

409 Altheim, Stiehl 1965, 69.

410 Lipiński 2015, 205. It can also be noted that this name was later used by some members of a famous Jewish family of Exilarchs in Babylonia. See Oppenheimer 1983, 40.

411 Beyer 1998, 54.

412 Frye 1984, 308, n. 65.

413 Wiesehöfer 1986. The fact that this king of Adiabene bore exactly the same name as the founder of the Sasanian Empire has been interpreted by Frye 1984, 279 as implication of “a replacement of the local dynast by a Sasanian prince”. This interpretation is possible,

All in all, we know 19 different names used by 21 individuals from Adiabene (note that some individuals bore the same name, and others used two names). Altogether, six names are Iranian in origin (Monobazos, Bazaios, Izates, Artaxares, 'Alkūd (or 'Alkūr), 'Ustānaq, and Ardashir), two are Greek (Helene and Grapte), and six others Semitic (Abdissar, Jacob, Chagiras, Nabataios, 'Uqba, and 'tlw). The etymology of two names (Kenedaios and Mebarsapes) is uncertain. It appears that several conclusions can be drawn. First, Iranian names dominated among male members of the Adiabene elites (including its royalty) from the first century BCE to the beginning of the third century CE. This may suggest that, regardless of their ethnicity, in choosing Iranian names Adiabene elites expressed themselves as loyal members of the Parthian Commonwealth⁴¹⁴ in cultural and politic terms. Secondly, Greek names were preferred by female members of the Adiabene royalty—this in turn corresponds well with the fact that the influence of Greek culture in the Near East was focused mainly on social elites; when it comes to “the female aspect” of this phenomenon, perhaps it was easier for female members of the royalty who did not play politically important roles to choose fashionable Greek names, not Iranian ones (which were more politically “correct” for male members playing important political roles within the Parthian Commonwealth). Thirdly, the fact that most non-royal Adiabeni bore Semitic names may indicate that most of the population in this area were Semitic in origin.

These conclusions concerning the Adiabene onomasticon can further be enlightened by the data from two selected sites—Nineveh and Ashur.

As regards anthroponyms from Nineveh, we know of only ten personal names attested between the first century BCE and the late second century CE; seven names are typically Greek names (Ἀπολλοφάνης, Ἀσκληπιάδης, Ἀπολλώνιος, Δεμήτριος, Σαραπιόδωρος, Ἀρτεμίδωρος, Διογένης),⁴¹⁵ and one is most likely Greek in origin (Δάμις as a derivation from Damianus/Damianos).⁴¹⁶ Only two extant names are non-Greek: *Trdat* is an Iranian name,⁴¹⁷ while the provenance of the name *Bay* is unknown.

The situation is very different in Ashur, where a large corpus of personal names is attested in votive inscriptions from the temple of Assur (mostly

but one can also imagine a local ruler adopting this name as an expression of his loyalty to the Sasanians.

414 For the term, see de Jong 2013.

415 Reade 1998, 69–70.

416 Dzielska 1986, 28.

417 Garsoian 1989, 416.

engraved between the end of the second century CE and the first half of the third century CE). To be precise, there are 68 personal names on record: 36 are Aramaic, 14 Akkadian, 12 Arabic,⁴¹⁸ and finally six Iranian.⁴¹⁹ Many names are theophoric, and it is the god Assur in particular whose name is by far most frequently recalled in the Ashur onomasticon⁴²⁰ (remarkably, in all the attested Semitic languages, e.g. Arabic 'Enī'al'assur: "Mein-Auge-ist-auf-Assur-gerichtet"; Akkadian 'Assur(a)hedden: "Assur-gab-einen-Bruder", Aramaic 'Assur'qab: "Assur-beschützte-(den-Sohn)").⁴²¹

8.4.3 *Anthroponyms in Syriac Sources*

The following names of individuals connected to Adiabene (from the fourth century CE onwards) can be found in the *Acts of Martyrs* and in the *Legend of Mar Qardagh*.⁴²²

418 12 Aramaic and 3 Akkadian names (attested in Ashur) also have good parallels in the Arabic language. See Beyer 1998, 153–167.

419 See Beyer 1998, 153–167.

420 Haider 2008, 197–198.

421 See Beyer 1998, 154–155, 164.

422 When it comes to the *Chronicle of Arbela*, the vast majority of names are Syriac, e.g.: Pēqīdā, 'Ēbēdmēšiḥā, Ḥairān, Šahlūpā, Aḥādabūhī, Šērī'ā, Māranzēkā, Šūbbālišō', Rēḥīmā, 'Abbūšṭā. There is also a large group of names inspired by the Biblical tradition: tradition: Simson (Samson), Isaac, Abraham, Noah, Abel, Yōḥannān, Daniel, and Joseph. The group of Iranian names mainly includes Sasanian officials and members of the upper social classes: Ādur-Farrah (marzbān), Ādur-zād (marzbān), Gufrašnasp (Mazdean satrap), Guhišt-āzād (eunuch at the court), Mihr-Narse(h) (a Christian apostate), Pagrasp (marzbān), Rāz-Marduk (chief of village), Rāz-šāh (chief of village), Zarāsp (general). For Iranian names, see Gignoux, C. Jullien, F. Jullien 2009. The general impression is that the population in Adiabene were Semitic-speakers—to be precise, native users of Syriac—while those who were deeply integrated into the social, religious, and political world of the Sasanian state expressed their standing by assuming Iranian names. With regard to the satraps (kings) of Adiabene in the *Chronicle of Arbela*, Narse(h)—king of Adiabene at the end of the second century CE—is definitely an Iranian name (**narya-sa(n)ha-*) meaning "of manly speech," "divine messenger" (see Gignoux 1986, 134, no. 678; Garsoïan 1989, 394); Syriac *Raqbakt* is likely to be understood as *Rakbaxt*, which includes the Iranian word *baxt* meaning "sort, destin" (Gignoux, C. Jullien, F. Jullien 2009, 118, no. 355); Šahrāṭ appears to include the Iranian term *šahr* (<xšaθra-) meaning "royaume" (Gignoux, C. Jullien, F. Jullien 2009, 129, no. 396; see also close parallels in Justi 1895, 276, e.g.: Šahrak, Šahrast).

1. Abraham, the bishop of Arbela martyred in the time of Shapur II by Ādur-Farrah, *mōbed* of Adiabene (AMS 4.130–131).⁴²³ The name is Northwest Semitic, relating back to the Biblical name⁴²⁴ of the patriarch: אַבְרָהָם.⁴²⁵
2. Yōḥannān bar Mariam, the bishop of Arbela martyred in the time of Shapur II by Ādur-Šā(h)ag, *mōbed* of Adiabene (AMS 4.128–130).⁴²⁶ The name is Northwest Semitic (the well-known Biblical name יוֹחָנָן).⁴²⁷
3. Mariam, the mother of Yōḥannān the bishop of Arbela (AMS 4.128–130). The name is Northwest Semitic and, it goes back to the Biblical name (Hebrew/Aramaic) מַרְיָם.⁴²⁸
4. Jacob (Ya'qōḇ) from Tell Šalilā (AMS 2.307), a priest martyred in the time of Shapur II by Narse(h)-Tām-Šābūr, *mōbed* of Adiabene in the village of Tell Dārā on the Great Zab.⁴²⁹ The name is Northwest Semitic, related to the name of the Biblical patriarch יַעֲקֹב.⁴³⁰
5. Maria, sister of Jacob (Ya'qōḇ) from Tell Šalilā, martyred by Narse(h)-Tām-Šābūr, *mōbed* of Adiabene in the time of Shapur II (AMS 2.307).⁴³¹ The name is Northwest Semitic, related to the Biblical name (Hebrew/Aramaic) מַרְיָם.⁴³²
6. Māhdād, a Christian apostate involved in the persecution of Jacob (Ya'qōḇ) from Tell Šalilā, and his sister Maria (AMS 2.307).⁴³³ The name is Iranian and translates as “don de la lune.”⁴³⁴
7. Paul (Pawle), a Christian priest and apostate from the village Bekaša(z), investigated by Narse(h)-Tām-Šābūr in the village of Ḥazza (AMS 2.308–313).⁴³⁵ The name originates from Latin (*Paulus* as a Latin cognomen and

423 Peeters 1925, 272.

424 By the term *Biblical* it is meant that the name is attested in the Bible (mainly in Hebrew, but possibly also in Aramaic). It is suggested here that such names were chosen among Christians in far-away Adiabene because of the existence of famous Biblical predecessors. Likewise T. Ilan categorizes the names which are attested in the Bible. See Ilan 2002 and Ilan 2008.

425 Ilan 2002, 59–60.

426 Peeters 1925, 273.

427 Ilan 2002, 134–143.

428 Ilan 2002, 242–248.

429 Peeters 1925, 274.

430 Ilan 2002, 171–174.

431 Peeters 1925, 274.

432 Ilan 2002, 242–248.

433 Peeters 1925, 274.

434 Peeters 1925, 274. See also Gignoux, C. Jullien, F. Jullien 2009, 94 (no. 267).

435 Peeters 1925, 275; Brock, Harvey 1987, 78.

- praenomen), but it is referenced in the Bible as the name of the apostle Paul (Παῦλος).⁴³⁶
8. Thecla (Theqle), a virgin from the village of Bekaša(z) martyred by Narse(h)-Tām-Šābūr in the village of Ḥazza under the reign of Shapur II (AMS 2.308–313).⁴³⁷ This is a common Greek name;⁴³⁸ its popularity among Christians was apparently connected to the early Christian story known as the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*.
 9. Maria (Μαριάμνη in the Greek version), one of the Christian virgins from Bekaša(z) martyred by Narse(h)-Tām-Šābūr in the village Ḥazza under the reign of Shapur II (AMS 2.308–313);⁴³⁹ see no. 5.
 10. Marta, one of the Christian virgins from Bekaša(z) martyred by Narse(h)-Tām-Šābūr in the village Ḥazza under Shapur II (AMS 2.308–313).⁴⁴⁰ This name was apparently popular among Christians due to the New Testament figure Martha (Luke 10.38: Μάρθα); it relates to the Aramaic name מרתא.⁴⁴¹
 11. Maria, one of the Christian virgins from Bekaša(z) martyred by Narse(h)-Tām-Šābūr in the village Ḥazza under Shapur II (AMS 2.308–313);⁴⁴² see no. 5.
 12. Amai (Ἐννείμ in the Greek version) (AMS 2.308–313), one of the Christian virgins from Bekaša(z) martyred by Narse(h)-Tām-Šābūr in the village Ḥazza under Shapur II.⁴⁴³ The name's origins are unclear; the closest parallel is perhaps the Greek name Ἐννίς [Ἐννία].⁴⁴⁴
 13. Barḥadbešabbā (AMS 2.314–316), the deacon martyred by Šābūr-Tām-Šābūr, *mōbed* of Adiabene during the time of Shapur II.⁴⁴⁵ The execution was carried out in Ḥazza by an apostate, Ḥaggai.⁴⁴⁶ The name Barḥadbešabbā is Syriac in origin and translates as “Sunday's Child.”⁴⁴⁷
 14. Aitilāhā, the priest of Šarbel (Ishtar of Arbela), who upon his conversion to Christianity was martyred by Šābūr-Tām-Šābūr, *mōbed* of Adiabene

436 Ilan 2002, 336.

437 Peeters 1925, 275.

438 Fraser, Matthews 2013, 191–192.

439 Peeters 1925, 275.

440 Peeters 1925, 275.

441 Ilan 2002, 423–424.

442 Peeters 1925, 275.

443 Peeters 1925, 274–275.

444 For Ἐννίς, see Fraser, Matthews 2010, 155.

445 Gignoux, C. Jullien, F. Jullien 2009, 128 (no. 388b).

446 Peeters 1925, 276.

447 Murray 2006, 23.

- (AMS 4.133–137); this is a Syriac theophoric name (also attested in Greek as Ἀειθαλής) which translates as “adduxit Deus (Θεόπομπος).”⁴⁴⁸
15. Ḥafsai (Ḥap̄sai), a Christian martyred together with Aitilāhā, the priest of Šarbel (AMS 4.133–137). The name has several parallels, especially in Edessa, and consequently is most likely Syriac in origin.
 16. Ya‘qōb, the priest martyred by Kurkāšīd, *mōbed* of Adiabene in the time of Shapur II (AMS 4.137–141);⁴⁴⁹ see no. 4.
 17. Āzād, the deacon martyred in the time of Shapur II (AMS 4.137–141); this name is of Iranian origin, meaning “free, noble.”⁴⁵⁰
 18. ‘Aqqeḇšemā, (AMS 2.365, 2.391), martyred in 379 CE together with Joseph (Yūsuf) and Aitilāhā;⁴⁵¹ this name is possibly Syriac.⁴⁵²
 19. Joseph (Yūsuf) from Beth Katübā, who was martyred in 379 CE together with ‘Aqqeḇšemā and Aitilāhā from Beth Nūhadrā (AMS 2.365);⁴⁵³ this name is Northwest Semitic and refers to the name of the Biblical patriarch, יוסף.⁴⁵⁴
 20. Aitilāhā from Beth Nūhadrā (AMS 2.365, 2.391), martyred in 379 CE together with Joseph (Yūsuf) and ‘Aqqeḇšemā.⁴⁵⁵ Aitilāhā is an Iranian name (see no. 14).
 21. Yazdān-duxt, a noble Christian woman from Arbela who supported Christian convicts persecuted under Shapur II (AMS 2.388; AMS 2.291); the name is Iranian, and consists of two elements: *yazdān* (“dieux”) and *duxt* (“fille”).⁴⁵⁶
 22. Ḥānanyā (AMS 4.131–132), the layman martyred in the time of Shapur II; the name is Northwest Semitic and is attested in the Bible (e.g. חנניה).⁴⁵⁷
 23. ‘Abdišō’, an eremite from Beṭ-Bgāš who converted Mar Qardagh (*Mar Qard.* 9). This is a Syriac name meaning “servant of Jesus.”⁴⁵⁸
 24. Ādur-Farrah, *mōbed* of Adiabene during the reign of Shapur II, involved in the persecution of Abraham, bishop of Arbela (AMS 4.13, AMS 2.317,

448 Peeters 1925, 277; Greisiger 2008, 130, n. 16.

449 Peeters 1925, 284–289.

450 Peeters 1925, 284–289; Teixidor 1967–68, 3; Frye 1984, 279, n. 23; Gignoux, C. Jullien, F. Jullien 2009, 45 no. 72b).

451 Wiessner 1967, 207, n. 3.

452 DHGE 6, 1932, 790–791.

453 See Peeters 1925, 290–291.

454 Ilan 2002, 150–168.

455 Wiessner 1967, 207, n. 3.

456 See Peeters 1925, 292–294; Gignoux, C. Jullien, F. Jullien 2009, 141 (no. 446a–446b).

457 Ilan 2002, 103–108.

458 DHGE 1, 1912, 63; Hoffmann 1880, 298.

- AMS 2.319); the name is Iranian, consisting of two elements: Ādur—“feu” and Farrah (< *farnah-, “rayonnement lumineux”).⁴⁵⁹
25. Ādur-Šā(ha)g, *mōbed* of Adiabene, involved in the persecution of Yōḥannān bar Mariam, the bishop of Arbela (AMS 4.128–130); the name is Iranian and consists of the divine name Ādur and the hypocoristic term Šāhag.⁴⁶⁰
 26. Narse(h)-Tām-Šābūr, *mōbed* of Adiabene involved in the persecution of Jacob (Ya‘qōb) from Tell Šalilā and his sister Maria in the time of Shapur II (AMS 2.307, 2.308; 2.309). The name is Iranian, consisting of two Iranian personal names—Narse(h) and Šābūr, as well as the word *tam* meaning “brave”.⁴⁶¹
 27. Kurkāšīd, *mōbed* of Adiabene who persecuted Jacob (Ya‘qōb) and Āzād in the time of Shapur II (AMS 4.137–141).⁴⁶² The name is Iranian, as it corresponds to the Middle-Persian term for “sun”—*khvaršed*.⁴⁶³
 28. Ādur-Xvarxšēd, *mōbed* of Adiabene who persecuted ‘Aqqeḇšēmā, Joseph (Yūsuf), and Aitilāhā in 379 CE (AMS 2.363; 2.378; 2.280); Ādur-Xvarxšēd is an Iranian name, consisting of the personal divine name Ādur and the Iranian term denoting the sun—*xvarxšēd*.⁴⁶⁴
 29. Ardashir, king of Adiabene who persecuted Christians according to the Beth Garmai *Acts of Martyrs* (AMS 2.286).⁴⁶⁵ The name is Iranian—it goes back to the old Iranian *Arta-χšaθra-.⁴⁶⁶
 30. Dēn-Gušnasp (AMS 2.487), *mōbed* of Adiabene under King Shapur II; the name is Iranian and includes two elements probably connected to the divine names Dēn and Gušnasp.⁴⁶⁷
 31. Pērōz-Tām-Šābūr, *marzbān* of Adiabene, persecutor of Christians under Shapur II (AMS 4.128). The name is Iranian; pērōz means “victorieux,” tām—“vaillant,” and Šābūr is in turn a personal name.⁴⁶⁸
 32. Šābūr-Tām-Šābūr, the commander of Shapur II, active in the persecution of Christians in Adiabene (AMS 2.314; 2.387).⁴⁶⁹ This Iranian name

459 Gignoux, C. Jullien, F. Jullien 2009, 31–32 (no. 19a).

460 Peeters 1925, 273; Gignoux, C. Jullien, F. Jullien 2009, 34 (no. 31).

461 Gignoux, C. Jullien, F. Jullien 2009, 34 (no. 31).

462 Peeters 1925, 284–289.

463 Peeters 1925, 287.

464 Peeters 1925, 289–290, Gignoux, C. Jullien, F. Jullien 2009, 35 (no. 32).

465 Wiessner 1967, 206, n. 3, 231, n. 1.

466 Gignoux, C. Jullien, F. Jullien 2009, 38 (no. 45d).

467 Gignoux, C. Jullien, F. Jullien 2009, 67–68 (no. 165).

468 Gignoux, C. Jullien, F. Jullien 2009, 115 (no. 342).

469 Gignoux, C. Jullien, F. Jullien 2009, 127 (no. 388a).

- consists of two elements—the personal name Šābūr and the word “tam” (“brave”).⁴⁷⁰
33. Šābūr-Tām-Šābūr, presented as a *magus* active in the persecution of Christians in Adiabene (AMS 2.134);⁴⁷¹ see no. 32.
 34. Tām-Šābūr, satrap of Adiabene under Shapur II (AMS 2.387; 2.388; 2.389.7; 2.391.4).⁴⁷² This is an Iranian name; see nos. 31–33.
 35. Tātāk, servant of a king of Adiabene, martyred under Yazdgird I (AMS 4.181; 4.182; 4.183; 4.184); the name is uncertain, and may perhaps be identical to Tat(a)rōs (the provenance of which is also uncertain).⁴⁷³
 36. Xvarxšēd—*mōbed* of Adiabene around 372 CE (AMS 4.137.16); the name is Iranian and means “soleil brilliant” (Av. *huuarə-xšaēta*).⁴⁷⁴
 37. Zardušt—a *mōbed* of Adiabene after Ādur-Xvarxšēd. The name is Iranian and consists of two elements—**zarat* (which is unclear) and *uštra*—meaning *camel*.⁴⁷⁵

The following names of bishops from the metropolis of Adiabene can be found in the *Synodicon*:

38. Daniel, bishop of Adiabene, who took part in the synod of Mar Isaac in 410 CE and the synod of Dadīšōʿ in 424 CE;⁴⁷⁶ the name is Northwest Semitic and refers to the Biblical name דָּנִיֵּאל.⁴⁷⁷
39. Joseph (Yūsuf), bishop of Adiabene, who took part in the synod of Babai in 497 CE;⁴⁷⁸ see no. 18.
40. ʿAbūšṭā, bishop of Adiabene, who signed the acts of the synod of Babai in 497 CE;⁴⁷⁹ this name is possibly Syriac in origin.
41. Sīdōrā, the secretary of ʿAbūšṭā, bishop of Adiabene, who signed the acts of the synod of Babai in 497 CE;⁴⁸⁰ this name is possibly Syriac in origin.

⁴⁷⁰ Gignoux, C. Jullien, F. Jullien 2009, 127 (no. 388a).

⁴⁷¹ Gignoux, C. Jullien, F. Jullien 2009, 128 (no. 388b).

⁴⁷² Gignoux, C. Jullien, F. Jullien 2009, 133 (no. 414).

⁴⁷³ Gignoux 1986, 166, no. 895; Gignoux, C. Jullien, F. Jullien 2009, 134 (no. 416).

⁴⁷⁴ Gignoux, C. Jullien, F. Jullien 2009, 140 (no. 441a).

⁴⁷⁵ Gignoux, C. Jullien, F. Jullien 2009, 150 (no. 470c).

⁴⁷⁶ Chabot 1902, 273–274, 285, 617.

⁴⁷⁷ Ilan 2002, 87.

⁴⁷⁸ Chabot 1902, 310, 311, 315.

⁴⁷⁹ Chabot 1902, 317, 620.

⁴⁸⁰ Chabot 1902, 317, 620.

42. Ḥēnānā, bishop of Adiabene, who took part in the synod of Aba I in 544 CE;⁴⁸¹ the name is Northwest Semitic and it goes back the Hebrew/Aramaic name חֲנָנִי.⁴⁸²
43. Mešabbēḥa, bishop of Adiabene, who took part in the synod of Joseph in 554 CE;⁴⁸³ this name is possibly Syriac in origin.
44. Ḥēnānā, bishop of Adiabene, who took part in the synod of Ezekiel in 576 CE⁴⁸⁴ and the synod of Išō'yahb I (through his secretary Mar Aba) in 585 CE;⁴⁸⁵ see no. 42.
45. Mar Aba, secretary of Ḥēnānā, bishop of Adiabene, who signed the acts of the synod of Išō'yahb I in 585 CE;⁴⁸⁶ Aba is a Syriac name, which goes back to the Aramaic word אבא ("father").⁴⁸⁷
46. Yōnadab, bishop of Adiabene, who took part in the synod of Gregory I in 605 CE;⁴⁸⁸ the name is Northwest Semitic and it goes back to the Biblical name יִנְדָב.⁴⁸⁹
47. Išō'yahb III, bishop of Adiabene before taking on the office of the Patriarch of the Church of the East in 649 CE.⁴⁹⁰ This name is Syriac (meaning "given by Jesus").⁴⁹¹
48. Isaac (Išḥaq), bishop of Beth Nūhadrā, who took part in the synod of Mar Isaac in 410 CE;⁴⁹² this name is Northwest Semitic and refers to the name of the Biblical patriarch, יִצְחָק.⁴⁹³
49. Salomon (Šlēmūn), bishop of Beth Nūhadrā, who took part in the synod of Dadīšō' in 424 CE;⁴⁹⁴ the name is Northwest Semitic and goes back to the Biblical name of King David's son and successor שלמה.⁴⁹⁵

481 Chabot 1902, 328, 344–345, 350.

482 Ilan 2002, 99–103.

483 Chabot 1902, 366.

484 Chabot 1902, 368.

485 Chabot 1902, 423.

486 Chabot 1902, 423.

487 Ilan 2002, 357–358.

488 Chabot 1902, 478, 625.

489 Holladay 1971, 131.

490 Chabot 1902, 480, n. 1, 615.

491 DHGE 26, 1997, 177–181.

492 Chabot 1902, 273–274.

493 Ilan 2002, 174–175.

494 Chabot 1902, 287.

495 Holladay 1971, 374.

50. Samuel (Šmuel), bishop of Beth Nūhadrā, who took part in the synod of Babai in 497 CE;⁴⁹⁶ the name is Northwest Semitic and goes back to the Hebrew name, שמואל.
51. Gawsīšōʿ, bishop of Beth Nūhadrā, who took part in the synod of Išōʿyahb I in 585 CE;⁴⁹⁷ this name is possibly Syriac.
52. Yōḥannān, bishop of Beth Nūhadrā, who took part in the synod of Gregory I in 605 CE;⁴⁹⁸ see no. 2.
53. Barinos, bishop of Beth Bgāš, who took part in the synod of Mar Isaac in 410 CE).⁴⁹⁹ The name is unclear; it could be Syriac, if the name is understood as containing the element “bar.” Otherwise, there is a Greek word present—βαρῖνος (lectio varia for βάλαργος), meaning “a fresh-water fish, prop. a kind of carp”;⁵⁰⁰ alternatively, it relatively closely parallels the Greek personal names βαρνάιος⁵⁰¹ and βάριος.⁵⁰²
54. Mare, bishop of Beth Bgāš, who took part in the synod of Dadīšōʿ in 424 CE;⁵⁰³ this name is Syriac and goes back to the Aramaic term מר meaning “lord,” or “master.”⁵⁰⁴
55. Aphraḥ, bishop of Beth Bgāš, who took part in the synod of Acacius in 486 CE⁵⁰⁵ and the synod of Babai in 497 CE;⁵⁰⁶ this is an Iranian name, *Frahāt* (without the additional *alaf* from the Syriac transmission).⁵⁰⁷
56. Ḥawaḥ, secretary of Aphraḥ, bishop of Beth Bgāš, who signed the acts of the synod of Babai in 497 CE;⁵⁰⁸ the name is possibly Syriac.
57. Moses (Mūšē), bishop of Beth Bgāš, who took part in the synod of Mar Aba I in 544 CE;⁵⁰⁹ this name is Northwest Semitic and refers to the Hebrew name משה.⁵¹⁰

496 Chabot 1902, 315.

497 Chabot 1902, 423.

498 Chabot 1902, 478.

499 Chabot 1902, 273–274.

500 LSJ 307.

501 Fraser, Matthews 1994, 86.

502 Fraser, Matthews 1987, 99.

503 Chabot 1902, 285.

504 Ilan 2012, 482.

505 Chabot 1902, 307.

506 Chabot 1902, 316.

507 Gignoux, C. Jullien, F. Jullien 2009, 34–35 (no. 34a, 34f).

508 Chabot 1902, 316.

509 Chabot 1902, 344–345, 350–351.

510 Ilan 2002, 190.

58. Timothy, bishop of Beth Bgāš, who took part in the synod of Išō'yahb I in 585 CE and the synod of Gregory I in 605 CE;⁵¹¹ this is definitely a Greek theophoric name (Τιμόθεος), which consists of two elements—τιμή and θεός—and translates as “one who honors God”; this name was born by Timothy, associate of Paul (*Acts* 16.1), but the name is perhaps better known from the New Testament as being born by the addressee of two New Testament letters (1–2 Ti).⁵¹²
59. Aḥadabuhi, bishop of Beth Dāsen, who took part in the synod of Mar Isaac in 410 CE;⁵¹³ this is a Syriac name. A close parallel comes from the Arabic 'ḥdb (Northwest Semitic—*aḥatabu*).⁵¹⁴
60. Qīrīs, bishop of Beth Dāsen, who took part in the synod of Dadīšō' in 424 CE;⁵¹⁵ this name is possibly Syriac.
61. Marehraḥmeh, bishop of Beth Dāsen, who took part in the synod of Babai in 497 CE;⁵¹⁶ this may be a Syriac name, as it contains the Aramaic word *mār*.
62. Qamīšō', bishop of Beth Dāsen, who took part in the synod of Ezekiel in 576 CE;⁵¹⁷ this is possibly a Syriac name.
63. Burzmihr, bishop of Beth Dāsen, who took part in the synod of Gregory I in 605 CE.⁵¹⁸ This is an Iranian name (Burz-Mihr) consisting of two elements—*burz* (“exalté”) and *Mihr* (an abbreviated form of *Mithra*).⁵¹⁹
64. Aḥudemmeḥ, bishop of Nineveh who took part in the synod of Joseph in 554 CE;⁵²⁰ this is possibly a Syriac name.⁵²¹
65. Yazd-panāh, bishop of Nineveh who took part in the synod of Ezekiel in 576 CE;⁵²² this is an Iranian name (Yazd-panāh) consisting of two elements—*yazd* (“dieu”) and *panāh* (“protection”), and as such it is an equivalent of the Greek name θεο-φύλακτος.⁵²³

511 Chabot 1902, 423, 478.

512 Danker 2009, ad locum.

513 Chabot 1902, 273–274.

514 Ilan 2013, 408.

515 Chabot 1902, 285.

516 Chabot 1902, 316.

517 Chabot 1902, 368.

518 Chabot 1902, 479.

519 Gignoux, C. Jullien, F. Jullien 2009, 59 (no. 132b) and 99 (no. 287).

520 Chabot 1902, 366.

521 DHGE 1, 1912, 1087.

522 Chabot 1902, 368.

523 Gignoux, C. Jullien, F. Jullien 2009, 145 (no. 455c).

66. Mar Aba, bishop of Nineveh who took part in the synod of Išō'yahb I in 585 CE;⁵²⁴ see no. 47.
67. Maremmeh, bishop of Nineveh, mentioned with regard to the Patriarch Išō'yahb II.⁵²⁵
68. Išō'yahb, bishop of Nineveh before becoming the metropolitan of Erbil as Išō'yahb III;⁵²⁶ this name is Syriac and consists of two elements—the name Jesus and the participle *yhb*, and it translates “given by Jesus.”⁵²⁷
69. Yōḥannān, bishop of Ma'alta, who took part in the synod of Mar Babai in 497 CE;⁵²⁸ see no. 2.
70. Simeon (Šim'ūn), bishop of Ma'alta, who took part in the synod of Mar Aba I in 544 CE;⁵²⁹ this name in Northwest Semitic and derives from the Biblical name שמעון.⁵³⁰
71. Yazd-panāh, bishop of Ma'alta, who took part in the synod of Joseph in 554 CE; this is an Iranian name—see no. 65.⁵³¹
72. Bar Šabta, bishop of Ma'alta, who took part in the synod of Ezekiel in 576 CE and the synod of Išō'yahb I in 585 CE.⁵³² This name is possibly Syriac.⁵³³
73. Kelilišō', bishop of Ma'alta, who took part in the synod of Gregory I in 605 CE.⁵³⁴ This name is possibly Syriac.
74. 'Aqbālāhā, bishop of Ramōnīn, who took part in the synod of Mar Isaac in 410 CE.⁵³⁵ This name is possibly Syriac.
75. Noah, bishop of Dabarinōs (Rabarinḥesn), who took part in the synod of Mar Isaac in 410 CE.⁵³⁶ This name derived from the Hebrew name נוח.⁵³⁷

In summary, several conclusions can be drawn. First, we have three large name groupings: Northwest Semitic (27), Iranian (21), and Syriac (18). Furthermore, there is a small group of Latin-Greek names (Paul, Thecla, Timothy). At least

524 Chabot 1902, 423.

525 Chron. Siirt 2.309–310.

526 Chabot 1902, 480, n. 1, 615.

527 DHGE 26, 1997, 177–181.

528 Chabot 1902, 310–311, 316.

529 Chabot 1902, 344–345, 350–351.

530 Ilan 2002, 218–235.

531 Chabot 1902, 366.

532 Chabot 1902, 368, 423.

533 DHGE 6, 1932, 943.

534 Chabot 1902, 479.

535 Chabot 1902, 273.

536 Chabot 1902, 273.

537 Holladay 1971, 131.

three names are uncertain (Amai, Tātāk, Barinos). Second, it is important to note that all Northwest Semitic names are born exclusively by Christians (never by Sasanian officials), and, what's more, they are all attested in the Bible (the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament). As a result, it appears most likely that they do not testify to the ethnicity of their users (assumed Jewish origins⁵³⁸), but were born by Christians because of religious connotations (as they belonged to well-known Biblical figures). This becomes all the more evident if we take into account the Greek names; all three Greek names, Timothy, Thecla, and Paul, most likely did not belong to ethnic Greeks (as they are referenced in a rural context), but were chosen as the names of very popular New Testament figures or early Christian saints. As for Iranian personal names, their holders belong either to the Sasanian government officials (both civil and religious) or to members of the upper social classes. It is of course possible to think that such individuals (especially in the case of officials) were ethnic Iranians (e.g., the two kings of Sasanian Adiabene named Ardashir),⁵³⁹ but it appears that in many cases the names were chosen as an expression of cultural and political standing (e.g., Mar Qardagh claims local Assyrian lineage, Yazdān-duxt appears to be a local noblewoman from Arbela).

To conclude, the analysis of personal names attested in three Syriac sources, closely connected to Adiabene (*Acts of Martyrs*, *Legend of Mar Qardagh*) or to its history (*Synodicon*), shows that most of the population in Adiabene consisted of Semitic-speakers—to be precise, native Syriac speakers—while those who were closely integrated within the social, religious, and political world of the Sasanian state expressed their standing by assuming Iranian names.

8.4.4 Summary

To sum up, our data span quite a few centuries, from the second century BCE until the Late Sasanian period (early seventh century CE). Unfortunately, as frequently happens with ancient records, the data are fragmented. The earliest data (Hellenistic and Parthian) either refer to the Adiabene elites or come from selected sites (Hellenistic and Parthian Nineveh, Late-Parthian and Early-Sasanian Ashur). The later data come almost entirely from Christian sources, which focus on the local Christian population (mainly clergy) and local

538 Contra Matthews 2003, 278. Hauser 2013a, 69 also writes about the population of Adiabene as being “probably mostly Christian and Jewish.”

539 This is also assumed by Luther 2015 who rightly remarks that although most of the population was apparently Semitic, in the areas close to the Zagros Mountains (and consequently to the Iranian homeland) the population may have been more diverse and have included Iranian peoples.

Sasanian elites. Nevertheless, it appears that several general conclusions may be suggested. First, Adiabene belonged to an area traditionally inhabited by a Semitic population whose first language was Aramaic during the Hellenistic and Parthian periods, which later developed into Syriac during the Sasanian period. This population frequently continued the practice of using traditional Semitic names. At the same time, other cultural influences in this area—Greek and Iranian—are easily recognizable. It is Nineveh in the first place (as well as Demetrias and possibly Arbela) that, as a case study, shows the dissemination of Greek culture in an urban environment, and especially among its urban elites. In Adiabene (as with the Parthian royalties) Greek names were also present and popular at the royal court. The fact that Adiabene belonged to the Parthian and Sasanian kingdoms for over three centuries also made a mark on its culture; its elites frequently chose to show their political and cultural affiliation by adapting Iranian names.

8.5 Monumental Reliefs in Adiabene

8.5.1 *The Batas-Herir Relief*

The Batas-Herir relief is located near the modern village of Batas in the Herir (Harir) district, some 74 km northwest of Erbil. The relief is carved on a rock cliff (see Figures 66–68): it presents a single male figure standing right in profile. Mathiesen describes the figure in the following way: “The man raises his right arm, while his left hand, grasping a sceptre, is at his left hip ... The figure, with close-cropped hair, beard and moustache, is wearing ear-rings and a headpiece bound with a diadem—presumably a tiara with earflaps which are turned up. He is dressed in a belted tunic reaching to his knees and hoisted in front between his legs by means of a ribbon issuing from his belt. A mantle fastened in front of his chest covers his back. Furthermore, he wears trousers and shoes or boots with laces. The mantle has vertical, regular folds. The folds of the lower part of the tunic are straight and run from the ribbon hoisting up the middle of the tunic to the sides of the legs.”⁵⁴⁰

On the basis of its stylistic features, the relief has been dated variously:⁵⁴¹ to the late second or first century BCE by Debevoise,⁵⁴² to the first century CE by

540 Mathiesen 1992b, 182.

541 The identifications of Lehmann-Haupt 1926, 281 and Edmonds 1931, 350–351, who saw the relief as an example of Hittite art, are now definitely outdated.

542 Debevoise 1942, 89.

Boehmer and von Gall,⁵⁴³ and finally to the first half of the second century BCE by Grabowski.⁵⁴⁴ The form of the figure's headdress in particular has aroused a great deal of scholarly discussion and even prompted some scholars to suggest historical interpretations of the relief and its figure. Boehmer and von Gall identified the headdress as a kind of royal upright tiara (τιάρρα ὀρθή or κίδαρις).⁵⁴⁵ Given the relief's geographical location (Arbelitis) and extant literary evidence (*Ant.* 20.66–67: Izates of Adiabene was allowed to wear this kind of royal tiara by Artabanos II, king of Parthia), Boehmer and Gall identified the figure as that of Izates II, king of Adiabene, and suggested that it must have been erected in commemoration of his victory over Vologases I, king of Parthia, around 52–54 CE (*Ant.* 20.80–91).⁵⁴⁶ By contrast, Grabowski rejected the identification of the headdress as the upright tiara, arguing that its peak is elongated much more to the back than vertically and the Batas-Herir tiara (being an example of tiara apagēs, also known as “satrapal tiara”) finds the best parallel in the headdress depicted on the coins of Abdissar, king of Adiabene; as a result, Grabowski suggests that the Batas-Herir tiara depicts Abdissar, the first king of Adiabene (around 164 BCE).⁵⁴⁷

To conclude, it should be noted that the relief is very worn-out, and since it is not completed by any inscription, all attempts to identify the figure must remain tentative (see chapter 9.1). As far as the dating of the relief is concerned, stylistic features (especially similarities with the art of Kommagene and images on the coins of Xerxes and Abdissar) point rather to the late second or early first century BCE than to the first century CE.

8.5.2 *The Navkur Plain*

Several monumental rock-cut sculptures can be found in the Navkur plain (northeast of the Nineveh region, see Figures 69 and 70).

At Gali Zerdak (a watercourse running against the northern side of Mt. Maqlub which closes the Navkur in the southwest, see Figure 71), there are six rock-cut carvings and monuments.⁵⁴⁸ Unfortunately, the state of preservation is so bad that only some details of the following reliefs can be made out.⁵⁴⁹ These are no. 136: a baetyl crowned by a flying Nike, of which only one wing

⁵⁴³ Boehmer, von Gall 1973.

⁵⁴⁴ Grabowski 2011.

⁵⁴⁵ Boehmer, von Gall 1973.

⁵⁴⁶ Boehmer, von Gall 1973.

⁵⁴⁷ Grabowski 2011.

⁵⁴⁸ Reade, Anderson 2013, 118.

⁵⁴⁹ The numbers (and descriptions) of the reliefs follow Mathiesen 1992b, 182–183.

is visible plus the contour of the body and the wreath with fluttering ribbons (three inscriptions on the relief are completely illegible); no. 137: a standing male figure (whose head is missing) wearing a tunic to his knees and wide trousers—his left hand is holding the hilt of a sword (or scepter) at his left hip, and his right hand is held above an object (perhaps an altar), one or two more standing figures, one of which possibly female (the dress reaching to the feet); no. 138: a rider moving left and crowned by a flying Nike (a dress with U-folds); no. 139: totally destroyed; no. 140: a nimbate head (possibly of a god of the nether world like Nergal); no. 141: a frontal standing male figure (head missing), his left hand grasping the hilt of a sword or dagger at his left hip, his right arm resting at the side of his body, the figure dressed in a tunic reaching to his knees.

The bad state of preservation apparently resulted in scholars giving vastly different assessments of the background and dating of the reliefs: according to Huff, the reliefs depict the figures in Parthian style, but from the Hellenistic period;⁵⁵⁰ Safar dates the reliefs to the Sasanian period;⁵⁵¹ finally, according to Boehmer, the best parallels come from the art of Hatra, and consequently the reliefs should be dated to the second century CE.⁵⁵² Concerning the character of the complex at Gali Zerdak, Boehmer suggests that it may have functioned as a Parthian elite cemetery (“Bestattungsort von Fürsten parthischer Zeit”).⁵⁵³ In turn, Reade and Anderson (following a recently suggested interpretation of a similar complex in Taq-e Bustan near Kermanshah in Iran as a shrine to Anāhitā as goddess of water) propose that Gali Zerdak may alternatively be understood as “a sacred water-source and appropriate centre for a ritual hunt, besides being a cool summer retreat for elite families from Parthian Navkur.”⁵⁵⁴

At Amadiya there are three rock-cut niches, two of which contain sculptures. Reliefs nos. 142 and 143 each present a frontal standing male figure, but relief no. 142 is better preserved, as we can make out a few details of the depiction: a frontal standing figure is dressed in “a tunic, trousers and mantle. The mantle falls over his back, appearing on both sides of his body. His right hand is raised to his head, while his left one is held at his left hip, presumably on the hilt of a sword. The figure apparently has thick hair in bunches at the sides of his face.”⁵⁵⁵

⁵⁵⁰ Huff 1984, 240.

⁵⁵¹ According to Boehmer 1981, 152, 158.

⁵⁵² Boehmer 1981, 164.

⁵⁵³ Boehmer 1981, 164.

⁵⁵⁴ Reade, Anderson 2013, 119.

⁵⁵⁵ Mathiesen 1992b, 183–184.

Another important relief in the Navkur plain is located near the villages of Khanes and Bavian (see Figures 72–73).⁵⁵⁶ In fact, this location includes a series of Neo-Assyrian rock reliefs, one of which underwent some alterations in “post Neo-Assyrian” times.⁵⁵⁷ Namely, the relief is ca. 4.20 m high and ca. 6.70 m. wide, and its central area is occupied by the sculpture of a mounted rider (ca. 2.60 m. high) which is a later addition to the Neo-Assyrian relief whose remains still include two standing figures (likely Assyrian kings, one to the left and one to the right of the rider), as well as three smaller figures (Assyrian gods—there were once perhaps as many as twelve⁵⁵⁸) standing on the back of animals in the upper-left corner of the relief.⁵⁵⁹

The relief is in very poor condition (because of recarving, two tomb openings being cut into it, and erosion), while the visibility of its details may also vary depending on the season and the angle of light.⁵⁶⁰ In short, the relief presents a rider in profile moving right.⁵⁶¹ The horse’s hind legs touch the ground, while its forelegs are raised (as if in a gallop).⁵⁶² The rider has a rather short beard, and wears a (perhaps diademed) headgear (cylindrical but a little broader at the top) with flaps (perhaps wide ribbons) at the sides and back of the head.⁵⁶³ Round his neck is an ornament (a spiral torque).⁵⁶⁴ The rider wears a folded dress opening in a V-shape in front.⁵⁶⁵ His left arm cannot be seen since it is covered by the head and neck of the horse, while his right arm is stretched back horizontally, and apparently holds a long lance.⁵⁶⁶

The interpretation of the rider relief as a Neo-Assyrian piece of artwork is now completely obsolete.⁵⁶⁷ According to most scholars, generally speaking it is an example of Parthian art.⁵⁶⁸ More specifically, Debevoise tentatively suggests that it depicts Tigranes II, king of Armenia (in commemoration of the recovery of the seventy valleys formerly ceded to Mithradates II, king

556 See Mathiesen 1992b, 184.

557 Mathiesen 1992b, 184; Reade, Anderson 2013, 97–118.

558 See Reade, Anderson 2013, 106–107.

559 Mathiesen 1992b, 184.

560 See Reade, Anderson 2013, 97.

561 Mathiesen 1992b, 184.

562 Mathiesen 1992b, 184; Debevoise 1942, 94.

563 Mathiesen 1992b, 184; Reade, Anderson 2013, 107.

564 Mathiesen 1992b, 184; Reade, Anderson 2013, 107.

565 Mathiesen 1992b, 184; Debevoise 1942, 95.

566 Mathiesen 1992b, 184; Reade, Anderson 2013, 107.

567 Layard 1853, 210; Bachmann 1927, 16–21.

568 Debevoise 1942, 94–96; Mathiesen 1992b, 184–185; Reade, Anderson 2013, 111–114.

of Parthia).⁵⁶⁹ Weighed against this identification is the fact that Tigranes II never wears a beard on his coinage.⁵⁷⁰ Therefore, it appears that a very specific attribution of the relief is not possible, and it must instead suffice to say that on the basis of its stylistic features the relief can likely be dated to the first century BCE.⁵⁷¹

What is more, Reade and Anderson have recently suggested that we may in fact speak about three stages of carving.⁵⁷² First, the space on the relief now occupied by the rider was covered by a large neo-Assyrian inscription. This inscription was turned into the relief depicting Alexander the Great in commemoration of his victory at the nearby Gaugamela. This relief was again reused to portrait, broadly speaking, a ruler of the Parthian commonwealth: either a Parthian king or one of his vassals.

8.6 Summary and Conclusions

Our inquiry on Adiabene's cultural environment revealed several distinct cultural elements: Semitic (including the local Assyrian, Jewish, and nomadic cultures of Mesopotamia), Greek-Hellenistic, and Iranian.

Concerning the quantity and quality of our data, most comes from the period between the first century BCE and third century CE. In this light, it is the Parthian period which is best represented in our record. The Hellenistic and Sasanian periods are less documented. The Hellenistic period is documented mainly by literary sources, while the numismatic and archaeological data is very scarce (Nimrud and Abdissar's coinage). In turn, the Sasanian period is documented in its early transition stage mainly by the archaeological and epigraphic data from a few selected sites (Nineveh and Ashur) and in its later stage almost exclusively by Christian Syriac sources, written from a very specific angle.

In chronological terms, ancient Adiabene should be understood as a country with local Semitic traditions which came under the influence of common cultural influences in the Near East: Greek-Hellenistic and Iranian cultures. Greek-Hellenistic culture spread in the region particularly from the third century BCE, while the presence of Iranian culture started to become stronger in the region from the second half of the second century BCE. From the first

⁵⁶⁹ Debevoise 1942, 96.

⁵⁷⁰ Mathiesen 1992a, 21–22; Reade, Anderson 2013, 113.

⁵⁷¹ Mathiesen 1992a, 21–22.

⁵⁷² Reade, Anderson 2013, 97–118 (esp. 114–118).

century BCE on, Iranian culture (first in Parthian and then in Sasanian forms) appears to have had a dominant influence on this primarily Semitic region, but Greek-Hellenistic factors left a lasting mark on the region, which is well visible in the archaeological record until at least the second century CE.

Concerning the Semitic cultures of the region, it appears that this area has traditionally been inhabited by speakers of Semitic languages, especially various dialects of Aramaic (which later developed into Syriac). This population continued local customs, especially old Assyrian-Babylonian cults (e.g. Ishtar, Assur, Serū, Bel, Nanaia). A great deal of local continuity is also attested in the material culture of the region (e.g. in masonry and ceramic workshops). It is possible that in the Sasanian period, Zoroastrianism started to overtake local Semitic cultures.

Jewish settlement took root in Adiabene before the first century CE, although we cannot precisely determine its origin, size, and character. This community rapidly expanded its number and political importance due to the conversion of the royal house of Adiabene in the first century CE. By the end of the first century CE, we may speak about a distinctive and politically important Jewish community in Adiabene which stood out among other Jews of the Parthian Empire.

Our evidence also includes traces of ties between Adiabene and the nomadic cultures of Mesopotamia (donations of individuals in Hatra, the cult of Shamash and Arsu, several Arabic personal names). This evidence is most elusive and requires further research.

Ancient Adiabene also became exposed to common cultural influences in the Near East including Greek-Hellenistic and Iranian cultures.

Greek-Hellenistic culture had a considerable presence in Hellenistic and Parthian Adiabene. First of all, it was particularly present in the urban environment, where it manifested itself in municipal organization (Nineveh and Demetrias, possibly Arbela too) and the popularity of the Greek language and cults. The cult of the following Hellenistic deities is explicitly attested (by name or sculpture): Hermes, Herakles, Tyche, and (perhaps) Hera. What is more, Hellenistic culture also concerned economic levels of both the urban and rural environment: a considerable number of everyday objects of this background are attested in the archaeological record (masonry, ceramic, coinage). It is worth stressing that several major agricultural and technological innovations were introduced in the Hellenistic period, which brought considerable economic prosperity to the region.

Adiabene's economy must certainly have profited from international trade, as its geographical location straddled one important communication line via Arbela and was close to another route which led via Nisibis and Hatra to

Ctesiphon. At the same time, its geographical position on the frontier of the Parthian and Sasanian Empires made it vulnerable to military campaigns, which gradually led to a decline in the rural prosperity after the Hellenistic period.

The deep penetration of Iranian culture in Adiabene certainly resulted from its history—Adiabene was an integral part of the Parthian Empire from, probably, the second half of the second century BC until the early third century CE. Possible brief periods of occupation by the Romans (esp. under Trajan and Septimius Severus) did not make any substantial mark on its cultural identity. Afterwards, Adiabene belonged to the Sasanian Empire. Iranian culture in Adiabene came to the fore especially on two levels: political affiliation and religious cults. In the first instance, Adiabene's elites chose to express their political and cultural affiliation by assuming Iranian names; furthermore, the well-known tendency to express one's own importance through monumental reliefs can also be seen as a sign of Iranian cultural identity. It also appears that local elites in Adiabene eagerly took part in the social life of the Parthian-Sasanian royal courts. In addition, the territory of Adiabene was permeated with Iranian cults; especially various forms of the cult of fire. In light of the Syriac sources, these were Iranian cults (and not local Assyrian-Babylonian traditions) that were most deeply rooted in Adiabene and accounted for the main competition to the rapid growth of Christianity.

It is also important to stress that although we may distinguish several cultural elements, neither remained in isolation, but different contemporary elements influenced each other. In fact, in many cases, it is impossible to point to one body of evidence and to classify it as only of one cultural background. For instance, in Nineveh the sculpture of Hermes has both Greek and Parthian stylistic features, and likewise Tacitus' description of Gotarzes II's divination practices has distinctively Iranian features, although it is attributed to Herakles. Many other similar examples have been given.

Political History of Adiabene

9.1 Adiabene in the Hellenistic Period

The first question that has to be posed is at what point Adiabene first appears on the international scene.

It has been suggested that the suffix *-ηνη* (*-ιανη*) has frequently been added to local administrative units by the Seleucids.¹ What is more, it has also been speculated (as there is no tangible data to verify such claims) that the Seleucids in fact retained Achaemenid administrative divisions.²

In this context it may be worth recalling Strabo *Geog.* 16.1.19, which claims that Adiabene had a ruler of its own (*ἄρχων*), although, at the same time, it was a province (*ὑπαρχία*) of Babylonia.³ Strabo completed his work around 24 CE⁴ (it has been disputed whether he did it within the last few years or perhaps the last few decades of his life⁵), that is, at the time when Adiabene had its own king and was a vassal kingdom within the *Parthian Commonwealth*. In this light, it is highly unlikely that Strabo's description fits the contemporary conditions. Of course, it is widely acknowledged that Strabo used various sources for his work.⁶ As far as his description of Adiabene is concerned, it has been suggested that the picture of Adiabene as (only) a province (*ὑπαρχία*)⁷ of

1 Sellwood 1985, 456; Huyse 1999b, 20.

2 Tarn 1984, 1–4; Frye 1984, 116; Sellwood 1985, 456. Indeed, Arbelitis is mentioned as a separate entity by Arrian *Succ.* (FGrHist 156 Fr. 9 §§ 34–38) right after the death of Alexander the Great.

3 The sentence in Greek is problematic. H.L. Jones offers the classic reading and translation (*Geog.* 16.1.3): τὰ μὲν οὖν Ἀρβηλα τῆς Βαβυλωνίας ὑπάρχει, ἃ κατ' αὐτὴν ἐστὶν ("now Arbela, which lies opposite to Babylonia, belongs to that country"). This reading goes back to many editors: Meineke 1877, 1027–1029; Kramer 1852, 284; Coray 1814, 159, n. 2; and H.L. Jones 1930, 194. Yet, the reading of the phrase ὑπάρχει, ἃ κατ' is uncertain. The latest edition by Radt 2005: 276, n. 23 and 2009: 254, n. 23 proposes the reading ἐπαρχία and consequently translates the whole sentence in the following way: "Arbela ist eine selbständige Provinz Babylonien." See also Biffi 2002, 135.

4 Romm 1997, 359–362.

5 See J.W. Drijvers 1998, 279.

6 See Romm 1997, 359–362; J.W. Drijvers 1998, 281–282.

7 Radt 2005, 276, n. 23 and 2009, 254, n. 23.

Babylonia may go back only to the late-Achaemenid and early-Seleucid times.⁸ Namely, with the foundation of the new Seleucid capital in nearby Seleucia by Seleukos I in approximately 305 BCE, Babylon rapidly declined in its importance.⁹ Therefore, the existence of a large province of Babylonia is extremely unlikely after 305 BCE.

However, the first time ever we hear of a king of Adiabene in literary sources is in the account of the battle near Tigranokerta in 69 BCE. According to Plutarch (*Luc.* 26–29), an anonymous king of Adiabene took part in the battle as an ally of the Armenian king, Tigranes II (the Great). This reference unambiguously shows that Adiabene became part of the Parthian Commonwealth before 69 BCE. But two questions remain. First, was the anonymous king attested in 69 BCE the first ever king of Adiabene, and second, when precisely was Adiabene incorporated into the Parthian kingdom?

As far as the question of the first king of Adiabene is concerned, we possess additional numismatic evidence that may shed more light on the issue (see chapter 8.3.1). Namely, the coins of Abdissar have recently been attributed to Adiabene on both linguistic and numismatic grounds.¹⁰ In the first case, E. Lipiński made it clear that the name Abdissar is of Semitic origin (meaning ‘the servant of Ishtar’), and, given the great popularity of the cult Ishtar in Adiabene, it is more likely to attribute this ruler to Adiabene than to any other country in the region (especially Sophene or Armenia, as suggested before Lipiński).¹¹ Secondly, F. de Callataÿ reinterpreted the inscription on one of Abdissar’s coins as [BAΣ]IAE[ΩΣ] [AB]ΔΙΣΣΑΡΟΥ [A]ΔΑΙΑΒΗΝΟΥ, which clearly indicates Adiabene as the origin of the mint.¹²

However, the coins do not include any dates, and consequently the dating must be based on the analysis of stylistic features. Fortunately, the available numismatic data gives us a few hints. In most general terms, Abdissar’s coinage exhibit a close stylistic affinity to the late Seleucid issues and as such can be placed in the period between the end of the third century BCE and the early first century BCE.¹³ Furthermore, it is possible to be more specific now.¹⁴ First,

8 B. Jacobs 1994, 65, 147–152, esp. 150: “spätachämenidische Verhältnisse”.

9 Boiy 2004, 137–166: “[from] world centre to provincial town.” See also Hauser 2000, 207–239 who shows that after the initial period of a rapid decline in the Hellenistic period, Babylon started to develop again, although this cannot be interpreted as a return to the previous position of the ‘world centre’.

10 See Marciak 2014a, 224–225; Marciak, Wójcikowski 2016.

11 Lipiński 1982.

12 De Callataÿ 1996.

13 De Callataÿ 1996, 142.

14 See Marciak, Wójcikowski 2016, as well as Grabowski 2011.

Abdissar's headgear is very characteristic: a kind of tiara with the top pointed downwards and the neck and ear coverings turned up. Extant close parallels are few and can be found on the coinage of Xerxes (king of Sophene, attested in approximately 212 BCE) and Baydād (ruler of Fars, early second century BCE). Second, the coinage of Abdissar (types II and III) features the image of the eagle standing on a thunderbolt. This was the most common image on reverses of Ptolemaic rulers, but was extremely rare on Seleucid coins. It was in fact used only by Achaïos (220–215 BCE) and Seleukos IV (187–175 BCE), and, on a large scale, by Antiochos IV Epiphanes (with reference to his Egyptian campaigns in 170–168 BCE). Third, Abdissar's coinage (type III) also displays images of a horse's head, which is known to the Seleucid coinage, particularly in the late third and early second century BC (especially Antiochos III [223–187 BCE] and Seleukos IV [187–175 BCE]). All in all, stylistic features suggest the first half of the second century BCE (especially in parallel to Seleukos IV and Antiochos IV) as the most probable context for Abdissar's coinage.¹⁵ Such an early date (out of the span between the end of the third and early first century BCE) bears upon the answer to the second question posed above.

No ancient text explicitly recalls the Parthian conquest of Adiabene,¹⁶ and consequently the historical interpretation must be based on the analysis of the historical context and the other available evidence. We know that it was Mithradates I who conquered vast areas both to the east and the west of his kingdom, turning the Parthian state from a regional power to the main power in the Near East.¹⁷ Among others, Mithradates I conquered Babylonia in 141 BCE (where he struck coins in Seleucia that year)¹⁸ and Greater Media (most likely with Media Atropatene) before the conquest of Babylonia (thus in circa 148–141 BCE).¹⁹ As for Adiabene, the data which may turn the balance comes from Nimrud, where archaeological excavations revealed signs of violent destruction dated to approximately 145–140 BCE (level two of the settlement).²⁰ It appears that this destruction can be connected with the

15 Marciak, Wójcikowski 2016.

16 *Geog.* 11.14.15 is frequently quoted in this context, but the text speaks explicitly only about the Armenian king Tigranes II taking over the region of Arbela (and the surrounding regions) from the Parthians. Thus, it must be assumed that the Parthians conquered Adiabene before Tigranes II, but this itself does not imply a precise data for the Parthian conquest. This interpretation is put forward by Dąbrowa 2012, 170; Hauser 2012, 1004. As a result, Dąbrowa 2012, 170 suggests that Adiabene was conquered by Mithradates II.

17 See Olbrycht 2010b.

18 McDowell 1935, 147 (numismatic evidence); Bivar 1983, 34; V.S. Curtis 2010, 10–11.

19 Olbrycht 2010a, 166–168; Olbrycht 2010b.

20 D. Oates, J. Oates 1958, 115–118; D. Oates 1968, 64.

Parthian conquest.²¹ Consequently, it can be concluded, the chronological sequence of Mithradates I's conquests and the geographical proximity between Media and Adiabene suggests that Adiabene was attacked by the Parthians after the conquest of Media and perhaps the attack came directly from the Median territory.

At the same time, it should also be noted that after the conquests of Mithradates I (170–138 BCE), there came a time of renewed fighting between the Parthians and local kings of Elymais and Charakene, as well as two major attempts of the Seleucids to regain the lost ground (in 140 BCE by Demetrios II Nikator and in 130 BCE by Antiochos VII Sidetes).²² It is not clear as to what the status of Adiabene was at that time. However, there can be no doubt that Adiabene was first conquered by Mithradates I in ca. 145–141 BCE, as shown above, and that Adiabene remained an integral part of the Parthian kingdom at the latest from the time of Mithradates II on (122–91 BCE; Mithradates II consolidated the former Parthian acquisitions and added new territories to his kingdom reaching as far as the Euphrates in the west).²³

If the Parthians conquered Adiabene in approximately 145 BCE, but the first literary attestation of a king of Adiabene comes only from Plutarch describing the battle near Tigranokerta in 69 BCE in which an anonymous king of Adiabene acts as an Armenian-Parthian vassal, it might be tentatively suggested that the monarchy in Adiabene arose only with the coming of the Parthians to the region who either elevated a local ruler to the status of a king (but within the Parthian Commonwealth of lesser kings subordinate to the Arsacid 'King of the kings') or installed a member of their own royal line on the Adiabene throne (like in Media Atropatene and Armenia in the first century CE or, possibly, the Sasanians in Adiabene in the third century CE²⁴). However, if the coinage of Abdissar is to be dated to around 164 BCE, then it follows that the monarchy in Adiabene arose in the context of the gradual collapse of the Seleucid dominance in the Near East (like, generally speaking, in many other countries in the region: Kommagene, Sophene, Armenia, Osroene, and Charakene).²⁵

In this context, it has been suggested by M. Grabowski that Abdissar may have been appointed as king directly by Antiochos IV Epiphanes during his

21 Hauser 1994, 457, 477; Marciak 2014a, 215.

22 Debevoise 1938, 22–28; Olbrycht 2010a, 171–175; Dabrowa 2012, 170–172.

23 Debevoise 1938, 22–28; Olbrycht 2010a, 171–175; Dabrowa 2012, 170–172.

24 See Frye 1984, 239–240.

25 This 'emancipation' frequently happened with the formal Seleucid permission, even if it was only a matter of acknowledgment of the (unfortunate from the Seleucid point of view) *status quo*. In general, see Sullivan 1990, 105–112.

eastern campaign in 165–164 BCE to Armenia and the Persian Gulf.²⁶ In this context, Antiochos IV's appointment of Abdissar would have mirrored his other decisions regarding local rulers during this campaign—the submission of Artaxares in Greater Armenia and the appointment of Hyspaosines as the governor of Charakene in ca. 165/164 BCE.²⁷

This expedition is known from both literary sources (Diod. 31.17a; App. Syr., 66 and 45; Porphyrios FGrHist, no. 260, F38 and F56) and fragmentary references in Babylonian astronomical diaries (B15' and C13'–C14').²⁸ We know that Antiochos IV Epiphanes reached Greater Armenia, where he forced the submission of King Artaxares, who was, however, left in his position (Diod. 31.17a; App. Syr., 66 and 45; Porphyrios FGrHist, no. 260, F38 and F56). In light of the Babylonian astronomical diaries, the events can be dated to October (2/3–30/31) 165 BCE. It is possible that Antiochos IV's forces reached as far as the northeastern shore of Lake Van on their march (if the reading AMIL in B15' is correct and if Ḫabigalbat/Ḫanigalbat is to be located near Lake Van). The next destination that can be inferred from C13'–C14' is the Persian Gulf, where Antiochos IV Epiphanes arrived before the end of November 165. With only these two well-known points in Antiochos' itinerary, it must be speculated as to where Antiochos' itinerary led through. However, it appears to be likely that the Seleucids crossed the Zagros via the Great Zab Gorge to Arbelitis and next moved along the Tigris River southwards. If so, Antiochos IV Epiphanes would have visited Adiabene; however, it must be stressed that this itinerary is reconstructed and no extant sources tell us explicitly about Antiochos IV Epiphanes engaging in any affairs in Adiabene. Thus, Grabowski's reconstruction of Abdissar's rise to prominence is plausible, but cannot be unambiguously proven. Furthermore, one can also imagine other scenarios: for example, Abdissar was appointed by Antiochos IV Epiphanes in a non-royal capacity, and only after Antiochos' death in 164 BCE did he reach for the royal dignity. Alternatively, Abdissar may have decided to gain independence without Seleucid approval, especially after the death of Antiochos IV Epiphanes in 164 BCE and before the Parthian conquest ca. 145 BCE. It appears that in the current state of the research, we remain within the sphere of pure speculation

26 Grabowski 2011, 133.

27 Grabowski 2011, 133 postulates that the appointment of Hyspaosines in Charakene as a governor by Antiochos IV Epiphanes can be considered as a direct parallel for the appointment of Abdissar in Adiabene.

28 Mittag 2006, 296–300 (with references to older literature). For the Babylonian astronomical diaries, see Del Monte 1997, 80–81; Gera, Horowitz 1997, 243–249.

regarding precise dating and the exact political circumstances of Abdissar's rise to independence.

9.2 Adiabene in the Parthian Period (1st Century BCE–1st Century CE)

The period in the history of Adiabene best illuminated by ancient sources is the first century CE. We hear of several rulers of Adiabene at that time in several ancient sources, but the most valuable knowledge comes from a Jewish historian, Josephus, who was apparently interested in Adiabene because of the conversion of its royal house to Judaism.

Three rulers of Adiabene—Artaxares, Izates I and Monobazos I—are attested before the king Izates II, the famous convert to Judaism.

9.2.1 *Artaxares*

Artaxares is known to us only through an enigmatic reference in *Res Gestae Divi Augusti* 32 (*Monumentum Ancyranum* 17.32), in which Augustus enumerates several rulers who came to him as suppliants, including Artaxares of Adiabene. The text was officially presented after the death of Augustus, which occurred in 14 CE, but Augustus had prepared it before his death, and, of course, it summarizes Augustus' achievements during his long political career (approximately 44 BCE–14 CE).²⁹ Artaxares is not attested elsewhere, and *RGDA* 32 does not include any specific information about Artaxares, except for the royal title and the attribution to Adiabene. However, some insight can perhaps be gained from the context, as Artaxares is mentioned in one line with several Oriental rulers (next to other rulers from European countries): 'Parthian kings Tiridates and Phraates, the son of Phraates' and Artavasdes of Media.³⁰

The Parthian king Tiridates is most likely to be identified with a usurper known as Tiridates II who was defeated by Phraates IV in 30/29 BCE, but managed to escape to Roman Syria.³¹ In turn, the only reigning Parthian king named Phraates who had the same name as his father was Phraates V (alternatively known as Phraatakes = the small Phraates), son of Phraates IV (and his wife Thea Musa), who sat on the Parthian throne in approximately 3/2 BCE, but lost power in 4 CE and escaped to Rome.³² Lastly, Artavasdes, king of Media Atropatene was Marc Antony's ally against Parthia and Armenia (in 36 and

29 See Eck 2007, 169.

30 See Marciak 2014a, 233–234.

31 Debevoise 1938, 135–137; Frye 1984, 235; Hackl 2010a, 67; Olbrycht 2010a, 182.

32 Debevoise 1938, 143–151; Frye 1984, 236–237; Hackl 2010a, 68; Olbrycht 2010a, 181–183.

34 BCE, respectively), but after the battle of Actium (31 BCE) was installed by Augustus as a client king of Lesser Armenia until his death in approximately 20 BCE.³³ In this light, it can be said that Artaxares appears in the company of Parthian kings who lost their power and escaped to Rome, all between 30/29 BCE and 4 CE. Given the fact that we know of two subsequent kings of Adiabene (Izates I and Monobazos I), who both reigned in the first century BC, it is very likely that Artaxares' reign directly preceded the reign of Izates I. This may in turn suggest that Izates I came into power at the expense of Artaxares. Artaxares' loss of power may have been the result of one of the two factors—either internal strife of two royal lines or an intervention of the Parthian suzerain. In the first case, many analogies from Parthian history can be given. Not to look too far, but Tiridates II and Phraates V, the figures mentioned in *RGDA*, lost their power to Phraates IV in 30/29 BCE and Orodes III in 4 CE, respectively. In the second case, Artaxares' downfall could perhaps be well understood in the context of the internal turmoil that shook the Parthian kingdom after 36 BCE. This turmoil included the rebellion in Media Atropatene, interregnum in Edessa in 35/34 CE, and finally the struggle for the throne of the 'King of the kings' between Tiridates II and Phraates IV.³⁴ If so, Artaxares (together with Artavasdes of Media Atropatene) may have been deposed by the Parthian king Phraates IV.³⁵

9.2.2 *Izates I and Monobazos I*

Like Artaxares, Izates I is known to us only through a single reference in ancient sources. In describing the monuments of Queen Helena in Jerusalem in *Bell.* 5.147, Josephus calls Helena the daughter of Izates, king of Adiabene. Out of many references to Helena in his writings, it is the only time when Josephus tells us of Helena's ancestry. In other cases, we are informed by Josephus that Helena and her husband, Monobazos (I), king of Adiabene, were siblings. It follows that Izates (I) was the father of king Monobazos (I) and his predecessor on the throne of the kingdom of Adiabene.

It has also been pointed to the fact that only a single reference may be mistaken; for instance, Helena was called the daughter and not the mother of Izates (II).³⁶ This is, of course, theoretically possibly, but, as long as there are no textual grounds to suggest Josephus' or a copyist error, the source reference

33 Debevoise 1938, 121–135; 146; Frye 1984, 234–235; R. Schmitt 1986, 653; Schottky 1997, 55; Olbrycht 2010a, 181–182.

34 Olbrycht 2013, 16–17.

35 Marciak 2014a, 234.

36 Barish 1983, 90, n. 85.

should not be dismissed out of hand. Thus, *Bell.* 5.147 testifies to another king of Adiabene, named Izates I, who reigned before Monobazos I.

An approximate dating of the reign of Izates I is possibly only through establishing the regnal dates of his successors—Monobazos I and Izates II (see below). Generally speaking, it will be shown that the reign of Monobazos I started before 1 BCE, and, given the time spans of reigns of Monobazos I (at least 35 years) and Izates II (exactly 24 years), it is very likely that the beginning of the reign of Izates I goes back to around 35–25 BCE, which corresponds well with the time of external and internal turmoil in the Parthian Empire under Phraates IV.

Monobazos I is the first king of Adiabene who is known to us from more than one reference in ancient sources. First, Monobazos (I) is depicted by Josephus as the father of his two sons and successors, who became royal converts to Judaism (*Ant.* 20, 17–96). In this context, he is presented as contemporary with the king of Charax Spasinou named Abbenerigos (sic) who can be identified with Abinerglos (the coin inscriptions: ABINHPTA[OY], or, less likely, AΔINNPTAO[Y]), king of Charakene known from the numismatic evidence. Abinerglos' reign is dated to between 10/11 CE and 37/38 CE, with a short break between 18/19 CE and 22/23 CE when a contender named Orabazaes I is attested.³⁷ Second, Monobazos I is also attested through his coinage. We know of one extant item bearing the inscription ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΜΟΝΟΒΑΖΟΥ (on the obverse) and ΕΒ ΑΤ (on the reverse). The former inscription certainly stands for the name King Monobazos, while the latter can be interpreted as the date: etos (year) 332. If the Seleucid era is used, then the coin comes from the year 20/21 CE.³⁸ Except for the two chronological hints mentioned above, the absolute dating of Monobazos' reign (especially the beginning and the end of his rule) is not possible due to the lack of data, but a relative chronology can be settled with more precision through the dating of the reign of his successor Izates II. There is definitely more data for his reign.

Concerning the achievements of Monobazos I, we are badly informed by ancient writers. The only piece of information comes from Josephus, who informs us that Monobazos I installed his son Izates II as the ruler of the district of Gordyene (*Ant.* 20.24). It follows that at the time Adiabene already ruled over Gordyene.

37 Schuol 2000, 320–326.

38 The use of the Seleucid era (and not the Parthian era) is attested in Ashur, Hatra, and probably Nineveh. See Bickerman 1944, 73–83; Bickerman 1983, 782; Reade 1998, 69; Sommer 2005, 372; Marciak 2014a, 209.

9.2.3 *Izates II*

The life and reign of Izates II, the famous convert to Judaism, is well illuminated by Josephus' writings. Additionally, Izates II appears in Tacitus' *Annales*. Let us first present the data that allows us to put a date on Izates II's reign, and then briefly discuss Izates II's role in international politics of those days.

First of all, the passage in Josephus' *Antiquitates Judaicae* which is exclusively devoted to Adiabene (and aptly labeled as "the Adiabene narrative": *Ant.* 20.17–96) is introduced by the temporal phrase "at about this time" (κατὰ τοῦτον δὲ τὸν καιρὸν) under the heading of the conversion of Helena and Izates II to Judaism.³⁹ The temporal phrase is clearly used by Josephus to start a new (lengthy) episode and it also serves chronological purposes of his narrative. Namely, the Adiabene narrative is inserted by Josephus in the course of his narrative about the procuratorship of Fadus, dated to 44–46 CE.⁴⁰ Of course, it is impossible to squeeze all events mentioned in *Ant.* 20, 17–96 within two years of the procuratorship of Fadus. As a result, it has been suggested that, given the heading of the narrative, the time of the procuratorship of Fadus is the approximate context of the events of the conversion (alone) of Queen Helena and Izates II.⁴¹ However, the conversion of Helena preceded that of Izates II, and the former took place when Izates II resided in Charax Spasinou, while the latter occurred only when Izates II was the reigning king of Adiabene. As we shall see below, Izates II's stay in Charakene could take place either between 10/11 CE and 18/19 CE or, more likely, between 22/23 CE and 37/38 CE. What is more, between his stay in Charakene and the accession to the Adiabene throne, Izates II also ruled in Gordyene.⁴² Thus, the two conversions took place separately, and at the least Helena's conversion occurred well before the years 44–46 CE. Alternatively, it has been tentatively suggested that the event which, in Josephus' mind, was most connected with the Adiabene royalty was their relief to the famine in Jerusalem which took place around 44–46 CE (see Josephus' laudations in *Ant.* 20.52–53 but also in *Ant.* 20.101), and the connection with the famine led to Josephus' insertion of the Adiabene narrative within the framework of his narrative about Fadus.⁴³

According to Josephus *Ant.* 20.37, at the moment of his inauguration as the king of Adiabene, Izates II decided to spare his kin rivals to the throne and to send them away to both the Parthian king Artabanos II and the Roman

39 See Marciak 2014a, 26–28, 243–244.

40 D.R. Schwartz 1992, 192.

41 Marciak 2014a, 236.

42 Likewise Brüll 1874, 67.

43 Marciak 2014a, 243–244.

emperor Claudius. This reference cannot be taken literally because the periods of reigns of Artabanos II (8/9 CE to approximately 38 CE⁴⁴ or slightly later—39 or 40 CE⁴⁵) and Claudius (41–54 CE) do not overlap. It has been argued that Josephus' reference rather points to "the most general chronological context" of Izates II's reign which, generally speaking, spanned the reigns of both Artabanos II in Parthia and Claudius in Rome.⁴⁶

Ant. 20.49–53 mentions Queen Helena's and Izates II's involvement in relieving the famine in Palaestina in approximately 44–48 CE.⁴⁷ The dating of the famine is slightly controversial, as the sources differ in giving us reference points. The *Acts* 11.27–30 point to the reign of Emperor Claudius in general (that is 41–54 CE) and to (about) the time of King Agrippa I's death in particular (that is, 44 CE). Likewise, Orosius (*Oros.* 7.6.12.) indicates the fourth year of the reign of Claudius (that is, 44 CE), while Josephus refers to the famine as to one of the major events during the procuratorship of Tiberius Alexander in Judaea in 46–48 CE (*Ant.* 20: 101). But the connection with the procuratorship of Fadus in Judaea in 44–46 CE can still be argued for Josephus (because of the inclusion of the Adiabene narrative, *Ant.* 20, 17–96, into Josephus' larger narrative about the procuratorship of Fadus, *Ant.* 20.1–99, and through the ἐπὶ τούτοις reading⁴⁸ in *Ant.* 20, 101 which would point to both Fadus and Tiberius Alexander).

As far as the involvement of Adiabene royalty is concerned, it seems that the recent interpretation of the papyrological data from Egypt can turn the balance.⁴⁹ Namely, we read in *Ant.* 20.51–53 that Queen Helena bought grain in Alexandria for large sums (as well as dried figs in Cyprus). At the same, the papyrological data from Egypt shows that the land of the Nile was itself affected by the famine between the autumn of 45 and the spring of 47 CE (very high prices of grain).⁵⁰ It is highly unlikely that anyone from outside Egypt may have bought grain there at that time.⁵¹ Thus, it appears that the early dating of the beginning of the famine in Palaestina is 44 CE is preferable (and the spring

44 Debevoise 1938, 166; Bivar 1983, 75; Karras-Klapproth 1988, 34; Thommen 2010, 233.

45 Schottky 1991, 86–87; Olbrycht 1997a, 82.

46 Graetz 1906, 790; Marciak 2014a, 236.

47 See Marciak 2014a, 241–242.

48 For the textual problem, see Vermes, Millar, Black 1973, 457, n. 8.

49 For the papyrological data, see Gapp 1935, for its interpretation, see Pastor 1997, 151–156 who is essentially followed here.

50 Gapp 1935, 258–260; Johnson 1936, 310–311; Pastor 1997, 153.

51 Pastor 1997, 153: even the Romans decided not to export grain from Egypt in such circumstances (when Egypt was itself affected) or even returned to Egypt the grain which had already been shipped to Rome. See Tac., *Ann.* 2.59; Pliny the Younger, *Pan.* 30–32.

of 45 CE at the latest for Helena's purchase of grain). If the connection with Tiberius Alexander is to be maintained, it should be interpreted as the period of prolongation of the famine (or its consequences) into the beginning of his procuratorship (which could also explain the purchase of figs from Cyprus).⁵²

According to *Ant.* 20:54–68, Izates II helped the Parthian king Artabanos II regain the throne in Parthia after the rebellion of the nobles. Josephus' description is problematic for two reasons. First, the name of Artabanos II's temporary successor is preserved as Kinnamos. This name is extremely rare,⁵³ and no Parthian king, usurper, or magnate of this name has ever been attested. Second, this event finds no parallels in ancient sources, although we know of at least one major rebellion against Artabanos II in Parthia (Tac., *Ann.* 6.31–37, 41–44; Josephus, *Ant.* 18.86–105; Suet. *Tib.* 66, Suet. *Vit.* 2; Cass. Dio, 58.26.1–4; 59.27.3).⁵⁴ Namely, in approximately 35–36 CE Artabanos II lost his throne due to the rebellion and was replaced by Tiridates, grandson of Phraates IV, who was politically supported by the Romans. However, in 37 CE Artabanos II regained his throne with the help of the tribes Dahae and Sacae. Most scholars accept the historicity of the rebellion described in *Ant.* 20:54–68⁵⁵ and interpret it as another rebellion after the 37 CE rebellion.⁵⁶ This chronological sequence is indicated by Josephus, who writes that “not long afterwards” (that is, after the regaining of power) Artabanos II died (*Ant.* 20.69). However, it has been also suggested that the rebellion known from *Ant.* 20.54–68 should be equated with the rebellion of Tiridates and the name Kinnamos given by Josephus is simply erroneous.⁵⁷

At any rate, Josephus' reference to Izates II's help⁵⁸ to the Parthian king Artabanos II shows his importance among Parthian minor dynasts. This is not

52 Marciak 2014a, 242.

53 The name *Καννίμος* was found on a basalt sarcophagus at Marwa (Meru) in northern Transjordan, see McCown 1936, 2–4; Abel 1936, 233–234; McCown 1937, 19–20, and the name *Κινναμω* is known from the fourth century CE papyri from Egypt, see Wuthnow 1930: 64.

54 See Karras-Klapproth 1988, 33–34, 176–178; Schottky 1991, 82 and n. 136; Hackl 2010a, 70.

55 Debevoise 1938, 165–166; Kahrstedt 1950, 64–66; Schippmann 1980, 52–53; Dąbrowa 1983, 91; Bivar 1983, 74–75; Frye 1984, 238; Karras-Klapproth 1988, 33–34, 69–70; Schottky 1991, 83–87.

56 Debevoise 1938, 165–166; Schippmann 1980, 52–53; Dąbrowa 1983, 91; Bivar 1983, 74–75; Frye 1984, 238; Karras-Klapproth 1988, 33–34, 69–70.

57 Kahrstedt 1950, 80; Schottky 1991, 102–103.

58 No reasons can possibly be given for interpreting *Ant.* 20:48–68 as a testimony of “unrest in Parthian-controlled Adiabene” (Dąbrowa 2012, 174) which shook Artabanos II's kingdom.

surprising because the Parthian history in general and the first century CE in the Parthian kingdom in particular witnessed periods of internal struggles for power when contenders relied on nobles from various regions or dependent kingdoms. Adiabene under Izates II was important enough to play a major role in such struggles. What is more, it should also be mentioned that, according to Josephus, *Ant.* 20:68, Izates II was rewarded by Artabanos II with the district of Nisibis. Adiabene's dominion over Nisibis in the first century CE is also confirmed by Pliny the Elder (approximately 23–79 CE). Indeed, Adiabene in the first century CE appears to have risen to the role of one of the key regions in the Parthian Empire, which also involved expanding its own territory at the expense of other minor kingdoms in the region.

By contrast, Josephus mentions Izates II's conflict with two other Parthian kings. According to *Ant.* 20.69–73, Izates II opposed the plans of the Parthian king Vardanes to wage war against Rome. Vardanes reacted to Izates II's rejection with the war threats. However, he did not manage to put them into practice, as he lost his life due to the rebellion of his subjects unwilling to start a war against the Romans. Although the episode in *Ant.* 20.69–73 does not find a direct confirmation in other sources, Tacitus in *Ann.* 11.10 provides an interesting parallel. Vardanes planned to regain the Parthian control over Armenia, but his plans were opposed by the Roman governor of Syria, Vibius Marsus, who threatened Vardanes with war. The tenure of Vibius Marsus in Syria is dated to between 41/42 and 44/45 CE.⁵⁹ What is more, we know that Vardanes was occupied with the conflict with Gotarzes II, which took place in two stages. The first stage of hostiles ended with an agreement by the autumn of 41 CE (the numismatic evidence from Seleucia),⁶⁰ but the hostiles renewed and were again in full swing in 44 CE.⁶¹ Thus, the period between the autumn of 41 and the autumn of 43 CE is the only period when Gotarzes II may have thought of undertaking a campaign against Armenia.⁶² Given the link in Josephus between Vardanes' domestic troubles and his inability to wage a putative campaign against Adiabene, it appears that a date closer to 44 CE is very likely, thus we can tentatively date Izates II's conflict with Vardanes to 43 CE.⁶³

In *Ant.* 20.75–91 Josephus reports domestic problems in Izates II's kingdom which resulted from the Adiabene elites (nobles and magnates) dislike for the

59 Vermes, Millar, Black 1973, 263–264.

60 Olbrycht 2013, 152–153. See also McDowell 1935, 225–226; Schottky 1991, 105; Wiesehöfer 1994a, 196.

61 Kahrstedt 1950, 27; Schottky 1991, 107.

62 Marciak 2014a, 238.

63 Marciak 2014a, 238.

conversion of their royal dynasty to Judaism. Whatever we think of the real reason for the domestic opposition against Izates II's rule, it led to two foreign invasions against Izates II—first by an Arab king named Abias (*Ant.* 20.75–80) and next by the Parthian king Vologases I (*Ant.* 20.81–91).

The invasion of Arab forces against Adiabene is problematic. A king named Abias from Mesopotamia is not attested elsewhere. The name itself has been connected either with a word *abāyā* meaning a *patrician*, a *sheikh* (and referring to a kind of chief or military leader; the term is attested in Hatra and Edessa: H345.3; H361.1; H1027.1⁶⁴),⁶⁵ or, perhaps more correctly, with proper names built around the Semitic word 'ab (father) and attested in Hatra as 'by (H6.1; H202i; H415a.3; H1040a.2⁶⁶) meaning "father" (a hypocoristic form).⁶⁷ Besides this, we are given only two hints. First, Abias is called king of the Arabs (Ἀράβων βασιλεύς) and his capital—Arsamon (Ἀρσαμον). The title "king of Arab" or "king of the Arabs" (mlk' dy 'rb and mlk' d'rby') was used by kings of Hatra, but the title is attested in the Hatra inscriptions only in the second half of the second century CE.⁶⁸ Besides this, the titles Ἀραβάρχης ("ruler of the Arabs" or "of the Arab," the steppe) and šlyt' d'rb ("ruler of Arab") are attested in Dura-Europos and Edessa.⁶⁹ Consequently, Hatra and Edessa (due to the geographical proximity) have been suggested as the homeland of Abias. However, it appears that the identification of the main site of Abias, that is, Arsamon, should be decisive. Several locations have been postulated due to lexical similarity: Tell Harzem/Arsamon (which is known from Prokopios of Caesarea (as Arzamon), Theophylact, and possibly the Peutinger Table as *Arcamo*),⁷⁰ or Arsham (known from Syriac sources as a location on the west bank of the Tigris between Mosul and Zakhō).⁷¹ The first identification is very close, while the second should be rejected on geopolitical grounds. The area east of the Khabur and west of the Great Zab belonged to the core of the territory of Adiabene in the first century CE. One could imagine a revolt of local magnates there, but not the appearance of a separate kingdom. At the same time, given the abundance of smaller geopolitical entities in northern

64 Beyer 1998, 169.

65 Segal 1986, 59–60; Retsö 2003, 414. Edessa: Ps.-Meliton ed. Cureton p. KH: BKRW 'BY' D'WRHY (*non vidi*, quoted from Luther 2015, 288, n. 56).

66 Beyer 1998, 153.

67 Luther 2015, 288, n. 56.

68 Teixidor 1967–68, 9; Millar 1993, 495.

69 Frye 1984, 280–281; Millar 1993, 447–448.

70 Kahrstedt 1950, 70, n. 48; Luther 1997, 187 (Ḥarzam); Talbert 2000, 1271 (Harzem); Luther 2015, 288, n. 56 (Ḥarzam).

71 Retso 2003, 414.

Mesopotamia (revealed in the times of Trajan, as well as implied by Strabo in *Geog.* 16.1.8), it is equally possible that Abias was a local dynast of one of such smaller entities.⁷²

In *Ant.* 20:81–91 Josephus reports Izates II's conflict with the Parthian king Vologases I. Remarkably, Josephus attributes Izates II's survival to the divine intervention which was caused by the withdrawal of the Parthians who had been alarmed about the simultaneous invasion of the tribes Dahae and Sacae on the Parthian soil. There are no exact parallels for Josephus' story in other ancient sources. However, two approximate contexts have been suggested. First, N. Brüll suggested that the attack of the Dahae and Sacae could be equated with the rebellion of Hyrcanian tribes in 57 CE.⁷³ Indeed, the Dahae bordered Hyrcania on the north, but the Sacae were settled in the West-Bactrian region.⁷⁴ Thus, the two rebellions cannot be equated on geographical grounds.⁷⁵ Second, we know of the coalition between the Hyrcanian tribes and the Dahae in the context of internal struggle for the Parthian throne between Gotarzes II and Vardanes.⁷⁶ The Hyrcanian-Dahian coalition supported Gotarzes II against Vardanes whose main stronghold was Media Atropatene. After Gotarzes II's death, the Parthian throne was obtained by Vologases I (son of Vonones). In this context, it has been suggested that the attack of the Dahae and Sacae may be understood as the first reaction of the Hyrcanian-Dahian coalition against a new ruler who was not affiliated with the coalition.⁷⁷ If so, Vologases I's attack against Adiabene should be dated early into Vologases I's reign, perhaps as early as 52 CE,⁷⁸ and definitely before Vologases I's other major engagements, especially invasion of Armenia in 53 CE, the rebellion of *Vardanis filius* in 55 CE, and the rebellion in Hyrcania in 57 CE.⁷⁹

Vologases I's attack against Adiabene is the last datable event in Josephus' narrative directly concerning Izates II. Of course, the dating of his successor, Monobazos II, bears upon the date of the end of Izates II's reign. However, the first datable event in the reign of Monobazos is his involvement in the Roman-Parthian wars frequently labeled as the 'Corbulo campaigns' in 58–63 CE (see

72 Likewise Fowler 2010, 68, n. 38.

73 Brüll 1874, 71; Neusner 1969, 65.

74 Olbrycht 1997a, 84–85, 87–88; Olbrycht 1998b, 15–20 and 20, n. 70.

75 Marciak 2014a, 238–239.

76 The groundbreaking study of the internal divisions and struggles in the Parthian kingdom in the first century AD is Olbrycht 2013, who is followed here.

77 Olbrycht 2013, 222; Marciak 2014a, 239.

78 Hansman 1987, 277; Olbrycht 1998a, 177–178; Olbrycht 2013, 222; Marciak 2014a, 239.

79 For Vologases I's other conflicts, see Dąbrowa 1983, 131–134; Dąbrowa 1984b, 141–147; Schottky 1991, 117–119; Olbrycht 1998a, 179–180.

below). If Izates II's fight with Vologases I can indeed be dated to approximately 52 CE, then there is a gap of several years between the two datable events. However, the Adiabene narrative (*Ant.* 20.17–96) delivers one remarkably precise hint at the length of Izates II's reign, according to *Ant.* 20.92, Izates II lived 55 years and reigned 24 years at the moment of his death. This data has frequently been called into question, as it contains round numbers often used in the Biblical tradition to express symbolic truths.⁸⁰ What is more, in the very next sentence (*Ant.* 20.92), Josephus goes on to say that Izates II left 24 sons and 24 daughters. This data again makes the impression of Biblical symbolism—it corresponds to the double amount of twelve tribes of Israel, and as such express a great of human prosperity through his numerous offspring (granted by the diving blessing). At the same time, the number 55 is not known to have any specific symbolic significance in the Biblical tradition, and it is not very likely that within one sentence we have both a number which conveys down-to-earth data (55) and another number which is purely symbolic (24).⁸¹

If the data on 55 years of Izates II's life and 24 years of Izates II's reign is applied to the other data we have, it gives a plausible solution. Namely, the last tentative date for Izates II's life and reign is 52 CE, according to *Ant.* 20.92, he died not long afterwards, that is, probably in 53, 54, or 55 CE at the latest. If we tentatively choose 54 CE and apply the data from *Ant.* 20.92, it would roughly suggest the year 30 CE for the beginning of Izates II's reign and the year 1 BCE / 1 CE for the birth of Izates II. This reconstruction also fits the fact that Izates II must have resided in Charakene either between 10/11 CE and 18/19 CE or between 22/23 CE and 37/38 CE. Given the fact that in *Ant.* 20:23 Izates II is called *νεανίας* ("someone in his twenties"⁸²) when sent to Charakene, the latter period is more appropriate. Thus, Izates II resided in Charakene after 22/23 CE and also managed to rule in Gordyene shortly before his father's death (see *Ant.* 20:24: Izates II's appointment at the moment of Monobazos I expecting his forthcoming death).

The only non-Jewish source which mentions Izates II, king of Adiabene, is Tacitus (*Ann.* 12.10–14) who recalls Izates II in the context of the internal fight for the Parthian throne between Gotarzes II and Meherdates in the winter of 49/50 CE.⁸³ Meherdates was a Roman nominee who was supported by a number of Parthian magnates and local rulers including an otherwise unknown

80 Brüll 1874, 71–72; Neusner 1969, 64–65.

81 Marciak 2014a, 240–241.

82 Thayer 1979, 423, no. 3494. See also Louw, Nida 1988, 108.

83 Ziegler 1964, 65–66; Schippmann 1980, 53; Dąbrowa 1983, 121–124; Bivar 1983, 77; Schottky 1991, 109; Hackl 2010a, 71.

Carenes, the Arab Acbarus (most likely the ruler of Edessa) and Izates II of Adiabene. Tacitus makes it clear that the support of Acbarus and Izates II was only opportunistic, especially Izates II is explicitly said to be inclined towards Gotarzes II, and both rulers departed Meherdates with their forces at the first convenient opportunity.⁸⁴ Consequently, Tac. *Ann.* 12.10–14 cannot be taken as the evidence of Izates II's pro-Roman inclinations.

9.2.4 *Monobazos II*

The reign of Monobazos II is less illuminated by ancient sources than that of his brother and predecessor Izates II but a few fixed points can be found.

First, Monobazos II is mentioned by non-Jewish writers in the context of the Roman-Parthian war in 54–63 CE (sometimes labeled as the 'Corbulo Wars').⁸⁵ In short, the war originated from both Rome's and Parthia's pursuit of control over Armenia. Immediately before the conflict Armenia lay within the Roman sphere of influence, but in 52 and 54 CE the Parthians under Vologases I invaded Armenia and installed one of the Parthian king's brothers, Tiridates as the king of Armenia (Tiridates I).⁸⁶ As Nero ascended to the Roman throne in 54 CE, Armenia was firmly in Parthian hands, and upon his accession Nero immediately made the decision to respond to Parthian actions.⁸⁷ The Romans invaded Armenia under General Corbulo in 58–60 CE and successfully installed a new king named Tigranes VI.⁸⁸ The Romans definitely profited from the period of internal struggles in the Parthian period, especially the rebellion in Hyrcania in 58–61 CE.⁸⁹ The war continued with Tigranes VI's raid against Adiabene and with the Parthian counterattack, which led to the siege of the Roman-garrisoned Tigranokerta in 61 CE.⁹⁰ In 61/62 CE a short truce was agreed to, but hostilities resumed in 62 CE when the Parthians won a decisive

84 Luther 2015, 290: "... die Adiabener in Kriegszeiten geneigt waren, ihr Fähnlein nach dem Wind zu hängen".

85 For the historical context, see Debevoise 1938, 179–202; Ziegler 1964, 67–78; Dąbrowa 1983, 131–161; Heil 1997, 86–141; Olbrycht 2010a, 188–191. For a summary of the state of research on the complicated issue of the chronology of the Roman-Parthian war of 54–63 CE, see Ziegler (1964, 67, n. 167), who is essentially followed here.

86 Debevoise 1938, 179; Ziegler 1964, 66; Dąbrowa 1983, 133–134; Olbrycht 2010a, 189–190; Garsoïan 1997a, 94.

87 Debevoise 1938, 179–180; Ziegler 1964, 66–67; Dąbrowa 1983, 134; Olbrycht 2010a, 189–190.

88 Debevoise 1938, 180–183; Ziegler 1964, 67–68; Dąbrowa 1983, 137–138; Heil 1997, 86–100; Olbrycht 2010a, 189–190.

89 For the situation in Hyrcania under Vologases I, see Olbrycht 1998a, 180–183.

90 Debevoise 1938, 185–186; Ziegler 1964, 68–69; Dąbrowa 1983, 140–142; Heil 1997, 86–100; Olbrycht 2010a, 189–190.

battle near Rhandeia in Sophene, which in turn led to a stalemate and finally to the peace agreement at Rhandeia in 63 CE.⁹¹ The Rhandeia agreement was based on a compromise: an Arsacid prince was supposed to become king of Armenia, but always after having received confirmation and insignia from the Roman emperor.⁹² In 66 CE Tiridates I indeed went to Rome to receive his royal insignia from Nero.⁹³

When it comes to Adiabene, Monobazos is mentioned with regard to several important episodes in this war: Tigranes VI's attack against Adiabene, the siege of Tigranokerta, the negotiations at Rhandeia, and the coronation of Tiridates I in Rome.

The role of Monobazos in 61 CE is described by Tacitus (*Ann.* 15.1–2) in great detail.⁹⁴ In fact, Tacitus pictures a dramatic scene of the Parthian council during which “*primores gentium*” (which may denote both Parthian magnates and minor kings in the Parthian kingdom) and the Parthian king Vologases I decide on next steps in the war, which took on a negative course for the Parthian side. Remarkably, the only two figures whose speeches are recalled are Monobazos II and the dethroned king of Armenia, Tiridates I. It is mainly under the impression of the speech of Monobazos that Vologases I decides to send a body of Parthian cavalry (under a certain Parthian noble Monaeses) and the Adiabene forces against the Armenian forces.

When it comes to the siege of Tigranokerta in 62 CE, in light of Tacitus's *Ann.* 15.4 the forces from Adiabene accounted for a vital component of the Parthian coalition during the siege. The main burden of the assault on the city's ramparts was carried by the infantry from Adiabene.⁹⁵ Monobazos II is also mentioned in passing in the context of the peace negotiations at Rhandeia in 63 CE

91 Debevoise 1938, 187–193; Ziegler 1964, 70–72; Dąbrowa 1983, 142–146; Heil 1997, 86–100; Olbrycht 2010a, 189–190.

92 Debevoise 1938, 193; Ziegler 1964, 70–72; Dąbrowa 1983, 146; Olbrycht 2010a, 189–190.

93 Debevoise 1938, 193–195; Ziegler 1964, 73–75; Heil 1997, 131–132; Olbrycht 2010a, 189–190.

94 For Tacitus' *Barbarenpsychologie*, see Marciak 2014a, 249–251.

95 This description is remarkable because the Parthians are usually associated with the use of cavalry. What is more, Josephus' *Bell.* mentions several examples of insurgents from Adiabene who belonged to the most-distinguished in the insurgents ranks. Generally speaking, Jewish warriors are believed to fight as foot soldiers and to excel the Romans in personal bravery and hand-to-hand combat (and to lose ground whenever discipline and tactics were the decisive aspects of the fighting). The key study of the Jewish-Roman war in 66–70 CE in strictly military terms is Price 1992. At the same time, *Ant.* 20.86 mentions 6000 horseman which were apparently the core of Izates II's military with which the king of Adiabene faced Vologases I (who arrived, in contrast, with both infantry and cavalry).

and the coronation of Tiridates I as king of Armenia in Rome in 66 CE.⁹⁶ At Rhandaia, Monobazos II was present at a conference and gave hostages to Rome, alongside the Parthian king Vologases I (Cass. Dio 62.23.4). The fact of sending hostages to Rome by Monobazos II (together with the Parthian king Vologases I and his brother Pakoros, king of Media Atropatene) is again confirmed in Dio's report on the arrival of Tiridates I in Rome in 66 CE (Cass. Dio 63.1.2).

In turn, Josephus' references to Monobazos II can be found in two works—*Antiquitates Judaicae* and *Bellum Iudaicum*. The first source provides us with basic biographic information about Monobazos II. In the second work, Monobazos II is referred to only in passing, and is never recalled as an active figure, but only with regard to other individuals or institutions related to the king of Adiabene. At the same time, these brief references are of some political and chronological importance.

In light of *Ant.* 20.17–96, Monobazos II was the older son of King Monobazos I and Queen Helena. He also converted to Judaism, but after Queen Helena and Izates II, and, according to Josephus, being impressed by Izates II's example. After his brother's death (and on his order), Monobazos II ascended to the Adiabene throne.

There is one noteworthy episode connected with Monobazos II and Izates II (*Ant.* 20.26–33). Namely, after the death of Monobazos I, the council of the highest nobles in Adiabene gathered to decide on the succession of the Adiabene throne. It was Queen Helena's performance before the council that led to the nomination of Izates II (which is presented as the fulfillment of the will of the deceased king). However, Izates II resided in Gordyene, and before he could arrive, Monobazos II, upon the council's advice and Helena's decision, had been appointed as the trustee of the realm. *Ant.* 20.32 describes what would normally be the ritual of coronation: Monobazos II received the diadem, the father's signet ring and the shield. Upon Izates II's arrival in Adiabene, Monobazos II made way for him. Monobazos II's loyal behavior was later presented as the reason for Izates II's order on the succession in Adiabene.

This episode, especially the description of the coronation of Monobazos II (not present for Izates II!), has led some scholars to speculate that *Ant.* 20.26–33 can be interpreted as evidence for a power struggle at the Adiabene court.⁹⁷ Namely, Monobazos II became the new king, but (either Helena or) the council preferred the younger son of Monobazos I, and Helena convinced the brothers

96 Ziegler 1964, 67–74; Bivar 1983, 81–85; Dąbrowa 1983, 131–153; Frye 1984, 239–240; Schottky 1991, 121.

97 Tameanko 2005, 16–25 followed by Ben-Ami, Tchekhanovetz 2011a, 237.

to a sort of power-sharing deal—Izates II reigned first, but Monobazos II was promised the succession after Izates II's death.⁹⁸ It must be said that this reconstruction is tempting, because our source, the Adiabene narrative, is panegyrically disposed towards the royal converts, and it would not be surprising to find the narrative concealing or embellishing the historical facts concerning the converts. However, the suggested interpretation goes completely against the literal meaning of the Adiabene narrative, which it is the only source we have, and as long as there is no other evidence about internal tensions in Adiabene to the contrary, there appears to be no way to move beyond the sphere of pure speculation.

When it comes to *Bellum Iudaicum*, we can find there only two references to Monobazos II, but both are important in political and chronological terms. First, in describing the initial attempt of the Romans under Cestius to put down the Jewish revolt in Jerusalem in 66 CE (*Bell.* 2.517–555), Josephus recalls a few soldiers most distinguished in the insurgents' ranks, among others: “Monobazos and Kenedaios, kinsmen of Monobazos, king of Adiabene”.⁹⁹ Second, in describing the possession of the rival insurgent factions in Jerusalem in 70 CE (*Bell.* 5.252–253), Josephus mentions “the palace of Monobazos, the king of Adiabene beyond Euphrates” as one of Jerusalem's landmarks. It should be stressed that this was one of three royal palaces possessed by the Adiabene royalty in Jerusalem, and each had its own distinctive owner. Two other royal palaces belonged to Queen Helena (*Bell.* 5.252–253, *Bell.* 6.355) and to a certain Grapte (characterized as a relative of Izates II, *Bell.* 4.567).¹⁰⁰

Remarkably, based on the short references from *Bell.* mentioned above (especially *Bell.* 2.517–555), it has been stated that insurgents in Judaea received support from the kingdom of Adiabene through Parthian permission.¹⁰¹ What is more, this reconstruction is believed to have found additional confirmation in a few references in ancient sources showing a mobilization of the Roman legions in 67–68 CE.¹⁰² Let us briefly consider the available evidence.

98 Tameanko 2005, 17.

99 The Greek phrase in question here is: τοῦ τῆς Ἀδιαβηνῆς βασιλέως συγγενεῖς. The term συγγενεῖς can be mean both a countryman, and a close relative, but can also denote a honorary title of the king's friend. The last option is preferred by Marciak 2014a, 257–258.

100 For the Adiabenean palaces in Jerusalem, see Marciak 2014a, 163–168.

101 This theory is most exhaustively developed by Neusner 1969, 64–66, but at least goes back to Widengren 1957, 200–201. It can occasionally be found in more recent scholarship, see, e.g., Zehnder 2010, 270, 282.

102 Debevoise 1963, 196–197.

First, Josephus' overall evidence is unambiguously negative. The context of *Bell.* 2.517–555 revolves around about praising personal bravery, in which two individuals from Adiabene (along with two other Jews) are praised by Josephus.¹⁰³ Thus, in *Bell.* 2.517–555 the context is about individuals and not military units.¹⁰⁴ Of course, the fact is that Josephus mentions an even larger number of individuals and family groups from Adiabene in his narrative on the siege of Jerusalem in 69–70 CE. In describing the Jewish attack on the Roman siege ramparts in Jerusalem, *Bell.* 5.474–489 mentions a brave non-royal warrior from Adiabene, Chagiras (for the name, see chapter 8.4.2)¹⁰⁵ In turn, when describing the final destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE (*Bell.* 5.474–489), we hear of some members of the royal family of Izates II (*Bell.* 6.356–357) who surrounded Titus and were accepted as royal hostages.¹⁰⁶ Thus, there was definitely a presence of some Adiabeni in Jerusalem during the Roman-Jewish war, but it does not appear to amount to groups of hundreds or thousands—only to individuals and small family units.¹⁰⁷ This presence does not have to be attributed to a sudden dispatch of official support from Adiabene to Judaea in 66–70 CE,¹⁰⁸ but can be better understood as a long-term result of systematic ties between the royal family of Adiabene and Judaea, which were forged by the conversions of Queen Helena, Izates II, and Monobazos II.¹⁰⁹ The royal converts from Adiabene systematically developed its ties with Judaea, which were most tangibly expressed by sending their children for education in Jerusalem and building royal dwellings there (the mausoleum and three

103 Marciak 2014a, 255–258.

104 Marciak 2014a, 258.

105 Marciak 2014a, 258–259.

106 Marciak 2014a, 259–260. Here we again have an interesting etymology, which can, however, be ambiguous. The members of the royal family of Izates II are interchangeably called οἱ Ἰζάτου βασιλέως υἱοὶ καὶ ἀδελφοί (*Bell.* 6.356) and τοῦ βασιλέως παῖδας καὶ συγγενεῖς (*Bell.* 6.357). Marciak 2014a, 259–260 considers υἱοὶ (*Bell.* 6.356) and παῖδες as very close family members (offspring), while ἀδελφοί (*Bell.* 6.356) and συγγενεῖς (*Bell.* 6.357) as members of the extended royal family.

107 See Marciak 2014a, 262–263.

108 Thus, there is no need to speak about some Adiabeni (who are attested in the sources as fighting on the side of the insurgents) as “coming [from Adiabene to Judaea] to help the insurgents” (e.g. Ziegler 1964, 77, n. 237, who, otherwise speaks against the involvement of Parthia/Adiabene) as they already resided in Jerusalem.

109 The royal converts were most likely followed by others in Adiabene, but it appears anachronistic to think that the entire, or a large portion, of the population in Adiabene (was) converted because of their royal elites (like in the Middle Ages). The religious situation in Adiabene was polytheistic; Jewish cults likely spread, but many other non-Jewish cults still existed and thrived (see chapter 8.6). See Marciak 2014a, 252–255.

palaces, the latter of which were obviously not used by the reigning kings of Adiabene who remained in Mesopotamia, but apparently by other minor members of their families).¹¹⁰

Above all, two important speeches in Josephus' narrative explicitly testify to the lack of official support of Adiabene or Parthia for the insurgents in Jerusalem. First, in *Bell.* (6.328–350—Titus's speech to the besieged in Jerusalem), insurgents' hopes of receiving outside help from "those beyond Euphrates" are contrasted with the behavior of "foreign peoples" who sent congratulations to Vespasian as the new emperor.¹¹¹ The message conveyed in *Bell.* 6.328–350 is somewhat general, but it does point to the lack of foreign support. Another speech (by the Jewish King Agrippa II) to the besieged in Jerusalem (*Bell.* 2.345–407) is absolutely clear in its message: there would be no help from the "kinsmen from Adiabene," because the Parthians would not have allowed it.¹¹² Regardless of whether we see the two speeches in Josephus' narrative as either accurately reflecting the historical conditions or *post-factum* constructs, they explicitly and clearly speak against the official engagement of the kingdom of Adiabene (and the prerequisite Parthian permission) in the Jewish uprising against Rome from 66–70 CE.

The evidence for the mobilization of the Roman legions in 67–68 CE (aiming ultimately for the Caspian front; see Suet. *Nero* 19; Cass. Dio 55.24.2, 62.8.1; Tac. *Hist.* 1.6, 59; 2.11, 27, 66; Pliny the Elder's *HN* 6.40) includes *Legio I Italica* (a new legion created specifically for the Caspian campaign), *vexillationes* from Britannia and Illyricum (perhaps Germania as well¹¹³), and *Legio XIV Martia Victrix* (which already reached Illyricum in 68 CE on its march to the East).¹¹⁴ It should, however, be noted that the sources do not speak about the plan for another *Bellum Parthicum*, but briefly and vaguely refer to Nero's plans (dreams) of a campaign to the Caspian Gates, thus allowing him to become another Alexander the Great. It has been much debated as to what extent these reports (or Nero's plans) can be taken seriously.¹¹⁵ At any rate, the evidence is not

110 Marciak 2014a, 263–264.

111 Marciak 2014a, 261–262.

112 Ziegler 1964, 77, n. 237; Marciak 2014a, 262.

113 Confront Tac. *Hist.* 1.6 with Tac. *Hist.* 1.31 and see Schur 1923, 108.

114 The key publication on this topic remains Schur 1923, 62–111, esp. 62–63 and 107–111. A short overview can be found in Debevoise 1938, 196–197 and Heil 1997, 159–160. Additionally, the establishment of new garrisons at strategic points in the newly acquired lands of the kingdom of Pontos, and the creation of *classis Pontica* in the Black Sea, may be interpreted as the preparation for a campaign in Albania. See Schur 1923, 85–91 and Dąbrowa 1989, 71.

115 See Debevoise 1938, 196–197; Ziegler 1964, 77; Heil 1997, 162–182.

directly connected to Judaea and Adiabene.¹¹⁶ Furthermore, it is far from obvious whether a Roman expedition in the Caspian region would have provoked a conflict with the Parthians.¹¹⁷ To summarize, there is no tangible evidence that either the Romans or the Parthians contemplated the renewal of mutual hostilities in the years between the Rhandaia peace treaty and Neron's death, less so over the control of Judaea or because some royal Adiabeni had joined the fight in Jerusalem.¹¹⁸

To sum up, Monobazos II is clearly attested as an active and important political figure during the Roman-Parthian war from 61 to 63 CE, and referred to as the current king of Adiabene from 66 to 70 CE. Of course, Monobazos II's reign may have started and ended beyond the fixed points mentioned above. In the case of the throne accession, the *terminus post quem* is connected with Vologases I's conflict with Izates II, which most likely took place in approximately 52 CE. Likewise, the year 70 CE is the last attestation of Monobazos II's activity, but his reign may theoretically have ended later. However, it should be noted that Monobazos II was older than Izates II, who is reported to have lived for 55 years. In 70 CE, Monobazos II would have been in his 70s. Thus, it appears that we cannot anticipate a much longer reign. The next king of Adiabene attested in ancient sources is Mebarsapes in 115 CE.

Generally speaking, the events in the reign of Monobazos II confirm that Adiabene maintained a considerable political significance as one of the most

116 See Ziegler 1964, 78 who thinks that Parthian-Roman relations remained on good terms until the death of Nero, and points to Suetonius's evidence (*Suet. Nero* 47.2) that Nero, after the coup d'état of Galba, contemplated his escape to the Parthians. Likewise, see Sanford 1937, 99–100. See also Dąbrowa 1983, 157 who rightly remarks that the trouble in Judaea was beneficial for the Parthians, as it considerably limited the Romans' potential to open military hostilities on other fronts (but Dąbrowa 1983, 157–158 [and 169–170, n. 21] also takes for granted “l'engagement de Monobaze en Judée,” for which, as it has been shown above, there is no support in the sources).

117 It is Debevoise 1938, 197 who has considered such a conflict of interest between Rome and the Parthians over Albania as obvious (“hostilities with the Parthians could hardly have been avoided.”). Likewise, see Heil 1997, 176. Other scholars have seen the issue differently. For instance, Schur 1923, 66 held the Roman objective as beneficial for the Parthians. Likewise, Sanford 1937, 95 thinks that both Rome and the Parthians may have profited from securing the Caspian pass (especially against the Alans). Lastly, Dąbrowa 1989, 70–71 sees the Roman interest in Albania as a logical consequence of the peace treaty at Rhandaia.

118 Schur 1923, 109–110 goes so far as to claim that Nero had limited the military presence on the Euphrates since no danger from the Parthians was expected: “als sich die loyale Haltung der Arsakiden gegenüber den jüdischen Schwierigkeiten des Reiches erwiesen hatte, konnte man die eine Elitelegion [*III Gallica*] von der Euphratgrenze zurückziehen.”

important vassal kingdoms in the Parthian Commonwealth. Importantly, despite Izates II's conflict with Vologases I (perhaps resulting from his connection with the Hyrcanian-Dahian coalition), Monobazos II must have changed sides in the internal conflict in the Parthian Empire, as he always appears as a loyal vassal of the Parthian king Vologases I in ancient sources. It is likely that the decline of other regional centers that opposed Vologases I, but were defeated, contributed to the further rise of importance of Adiabene on the Parthian political scene.

9.3 Adiabene and Trajan's *Parthian War*

The main problem with the history of Trajan's *Parthian War* is that the available sources do not provide a continuous and accurate narrative.¹¹⁹ To be precise, the two main sources that treated it extensively are preserved very fragmentarily in Byzantine excerpts. These are Arrian's *Parthica* and Cassius Dio's *Roman History*. The best excerpts from Arrian can be found in the writings of Stephen of Byzantium (fl. sixth century CE) and in the tenth-century encyclopedia known as the *Souda*. In turn, good excerpts of Dio were created on behalf of the Byzantine Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos in the tenth century CE and are nowadays known in two versions, *Excerpta Ursiniana* (Ex. Ug. and Ex. Ur.) and *Excerpta Valesiana* (Ex. Val.). Furthermore, we possess excerpts made by Xiphilinus (fl. eleventh century CE) and Zonaras (fl. twelfth century CE), which, although they are more recent, are frequently considered to be even more valuable than older excerpts.¹²⁰

Given all the fragments of ancient sources, with the excerpt of Xiphilinus in the first place, the following reconstruction of the sequence of events has been tentatively suggested by F.A. Lepper: 1: causes and preliminaries, 2: the campaign in Armenia, 3: the invasion of northern Mesopotamia, 4: the earthquake [in Antioch], 5: [invasion into] Adiabene and Ctesiphon, 6: [Trajan in] the Persian gulf, 7: the revolt and the Roman withdrawal.¹²¹

The focus of our study is on Adiabene, and therefore it is essential to ask when Adiabene appears in the context of Trajan's activities during his eastern campaign. Generally speaking, Adiabene appears in a twofold context of

119 For a detailed discussion of the problem of sources, see Guey 1937, 83–103 and Lepper 1948, 1–22. A brief overview is offered by Bivar 1983, 87.

120 Lepper 1948, 3–6.

121 Lepper 1948, 6–11.

Trajan's campaigns: during the conquest of Mesopotamia, and during Trajan's final offensive that led to the capture of Ctesiphon.

To be precise, Adiabene is mentioned in the following aspects of the conquest of Mesopotamia:¹²²

- 1 – During his stay at Abgar's (Abgar VII) Edessa (which took place after the conquest of Armenia and the capture of Nisibis), Trajan received embassies from Mannos, some of whose troops had been sent to help Mebarsapes, the king of Adiabene, and had been cut up by the Romans. Trajan decided not to wait for the attack of these two enemies (...) but went out against them in the direction of Adiabene. Thus it came about that Singara and some other places were occupied by Lusius Quietus (Exc. Ug. 54).¹²³
- 2 – One of the other places captured was Adenystrae, where Sentius, a centurion who had been sent on an embassy to Mebarsapes of Adiabene, had been thrown into prison (Exc. Ur. 15).¹²⁴
- 3 – after the mention of Adenystrae, Arrian speaks of Libana on the Tigris. The context is unspecified (Arrian *Parth.* 9).¹²⁵

A few conclusions are in order. First, Mebarsapes was militarily active in northern Mesopotamia, that is, generally speaking west of the Tigris. Second, the sources mention several places in the context of the Romans campaign against Mebarsapes. To begin with, the text indicates that Singara was captured at the cost of Mebarsapes, who defended this place against the Romans. Likewise, Adenystrae appears to be within the range of Mebarsapes's control since Mebarsapes jailed the Roman centurion there who had been sent to him. In a similar way, Nisibis is suggested by several scholars as Mebarsapes' territory on the grounds that Mebarsapes was involved in the battle near Nisibis. This particular interpretation is, however, not straightforward, since it is only a matter of conjecture that the slaughter of Mannos' troops took place during the battle near Nisibis.

These observations may in turn lead to another conclusion about the territorial extent of Adiabene. On the one hand, it is tempting to see Singara, Adenystrae, and possibly Libana as belonging to the kingdom of Adiabene at that time.

¹²² See Lepper 1948, 8–10, who is followed here.

¹²³ Boissvain 1901, 211. See also Roos 1967, 239–240.

¹²⁴ Boissvain 1901, 214.

¹²⁵ Roos 1967, 229.

Singara is well known from other ancient sources (Pliny the Elder *HN* 5.86, Cass. Dio 68.22; Ravenna Cosmography, Peutinger Table, Ammianus), and its location does not entail any problems. The modern site of Sinjar still features a wall circuit (enclosing an area of approximately 20 ha), and the Roman masonry found at the site has been dated to the early fourth century CE.¹²⁶ By contrast, the location of Adenystrae is problematic. It has been widely identified (on linguistic grounds) as medieval Dunaysir (which currently does not feature any ancient remains),¹²⁷ but this identification should be rejected on geographical grounds. In general, the site is located too far from Adiabene, and in particular, it lies west of Nisibis which was already under Roman control in 115 CE. It appears to be more straightforward to look for Adenystrae east of Nisibis. Indeed, Dillemann suggested that it should be sought for on the route between Nisibis and Hatra, and likely identified with *Ad Herculem* mentioned on the Peutinger Table.¹²⁸ The site of *Ad Herculem* was tentatively identified as modern Jaddala (northeast of Hatra) in the course of A. Stein's aerial research.¹²⁹ In turn, Libana is widely identified as the city of Ashur under a different name.¹³⁰ This identification has been based on geographical grounds. Ashur is the largest known settlement in the area which has not been identified (yet) with other toponyms mentioned in the context of Trajan's Parthian War. This identification has, however, been cast into doubt on the grounds that the cult of Assur continued at least into the mid-third century CE, which may suggest that the name of the city derived from its patron deity continued as well.¹³¹ In fact, the name Ashur ('twr) is well-attested in Syriac sources from the 4th century AD on.¹³² Indeed, it should be noted that large historic settlements in this area (e.g., Arbela and Nineveh) featured a great deal of continuity in their religious tradition and the local nomenclature.¹³³ At the same time, it should be noted that during Trajan's campaign in Mesopotamia we hear of a number of Oriental rulers who, generally speaking, acted together against the Romans. In the case of Trajan's campaign in northern Mesopotamia, the sources name the

126 D. Oates 1968, 97–98, Fig. 8; 106; Gregory, Kennedy 1985, 6–21; Kennedy, Riley 1990, 125–131; Pollard 2000, 274–275.

127 Sachau 1881, 79–80; Sachau 1883, 402, 425–427; Sinclair 1989, 224–226; Sinclair 1994–1995, 234; Bosworth 2006; Comfort 2009, 84; Marciak 2014c.

128 Dillemann 1962, 285.

129 Gregory, Kennedy 1985, 82–83, 399, 449; Reade 1998, 81.

130 Reade 1998, 81.

131 Hauser 2011, 147.

132 See C. Jullien 2004, 145.

133 Marciak 2014c, 130–131.

following rulers: Abgar (VII), the king of Edessa; Mannos of Arabia; Sporakes from Anthemousia; and Manisaros.

The identity of Edessa is, of course, beyond question. In turn, Anthemousia is well known from other ancient sources, and this name was used to refer to both the city on the Euphrates and the nearby region. The city is widely identified as modern Suruç in Turkey, some 45 km southwest of Edessa.¹³⁴ By contrast, the identity of Mannos and Manisaros is very hard to establish.¹³⁵ Dillemann suggests a town, known from Stephen of Byzantium, Mannakarta (“the city of Main(u)”), located on the Zergan River, just below Mardin as the site of Mannos.¹³⁶ By contrast, it has also been suggested that the geographical context of Roman military activity in 115 CE (focused in the Sinjar region) suggests Hatra as the location of Mannos’ Arabs.¹³⁷ However, there is no direct data to support this identification.¹³⁸ The only hint we are given is the expression “of Arabia,” which is not precise at all and may in fact refer to a number of geopolitical or ethnic identities in Roman or Parthian Mesopotamia. For instance, Mannos has frequently been attributed to the Arabs called *Scenitae*, which are known from *Geog.* 16.1.8.¹³⁹ However, the name *Scenitae* is not an ethnicon, but a designation of a way of life which translates as “one who dwells in a tent.” Such a name clearly indicates a style of life of a nomadic tribe living on pasture, booty, and tolls (taken from travelers). Consequently, it is hardly possible to pin down the location of Mannos’ Arabs.¹⁴⁰ Lastly, Manisaros has frequently been identified as the king of Gordyene on the grounds that the sources recall Trajan’s campaigns against *Cardueni*, and Manisaros’ offer of

134 A good overview with numerous references to older literature is given by G.M. Cohen 2013, 58–61.

135 Manu is of course a name frequently recurring among rulers of Edessa, but it is clear from Cass. Dio that the king of Edessa was named Abgar at that time (Abgar VII). See Retsö 2013, 434. Mannos has also been connected with Singara (von Gutschmid 1888, 142–14), for which, however, there is no evidence.

136 Dillemann 1962, 76–77.

137 See Retsö 2013, 434–435.

138 It has also been attempted to connect Mannos with Ma’nū (Sommer 2005, 236, 368 n. 54, 373–374), an epigraphically attested ruler of Hatra. This attempt is, however, chronologically mistaken. See Hartmann, Luther 2002; Hartmann 2010, 614; Hartmann 2015, 343–348.

139 Salmon 1944, 287; Venning 2011, 513; Bennett 1997, 191.

140 Shahîd 1984, 243–244; Sartre 2005, 239; Myers 2010, 16–17; Marciak 2012b, 182. According to Hartmann 2015, 330, Mannos ruled over “die Edessa benachbarten arabischen Nomadenstämme im Raum zwischen der Osrhoëne und dem nordmesopotamischen Gebiet der Adiabene um Nisibis und Singara.”

territorial cessions to Trajan broadly referred to Armenia and Mesopotamia.¹⁴¹ However, there are again no direct hints in our sources to firmly support this identification. First of all, there is no direct link between Manisaros and *Cardueni* in our sources (the latter are mentioned as an *ethnos* without any reference to its ruler). Furthermore, the sources mention several other tribes and cities subjugated by Trajan in the region of Armenia and Mesopotamia, e.g.: Batnae, the Mardians, the Marcomedi, Singara, Thebeta, Hatra, and Libana.¹⁴² Theoretically, each of these entities might have had a ruler named Manisaros.¹⁴³

What is more, it appears that all local rulers in Mesopotamia can be seen as members of the Parthian Commonwealth and consequently acting on behalf of their Parthian suzerain Osroes. Even Abgar of Edessa (Abgar VII), who first subordinated himself to Trajan, is said by Dio to later revolt against the Romans. In this light, initial submissions in Armenia and Mesopotamia may have been opportunistic. Their goal was to appease the winning Romans and persist until a change of fortune would bring back the supremacy of the Parthians (see a perfect illustration of this truth in the speech of Monobazos II of Adiabene

141 This interpretation goes back to von Gutschmid 1888, 143, and has been followed by Guey 1937, 69, but rejected by Lepper 1948, 8 (to mention only major historians of Trajan's *Parthian War*). Besides this, it resurfaces in many general treatments of Trajan's campaigns in the East.

142 Guey 1937, 72–73 and Lepper 1948, 8–10. As for Hatra, it follows from the famous episode of Trajan's siege of Hatra that the city was *not* captured by Trajan—either through an exhaustive attempt or during any other time. At the same time, it should be noted that according to Cass. Dio (68.31), the city revolted against Trajan (after the Roman conquest of Ctesiphon). The idea of the revolt implies that the city first came to an agreement with Trajan and accepted his supremacy (but apparently without being besieged and captured). Theoretically, it is also possible that Dio's idea of the revolt of Hatra (ἀφειστήκεσαν) can be understood in a more general sense as a refusal by foreigners to accept Roman sovereignty without resisting. In this case, one could probably argue that Trajan's attempt to capture Hatra was his first contact with this city. This option, however, is less likely, as it does not adequately address the strategic problem that Trajan decided to launch a major offensive along the Euphrates (and the Tigris?) without fully controlling Hatra to his rear. See Isaac 2013, 23–24 (who is followed here), and Sommer 2013, 35, 37. Most likely, Hatra primarily acknowledged Trajan's suzerainty and revolted only later. See Gawlikowski 1998, 422; Hartmann, Luther 2002; Hartmann 2010, 614; Hartmann 2015, 328–329, 343–348 (who identify Hatra's ruler with Worōd attested in Hatra inscriptions).

143 See M. Sommer's emphatic description: “Mesopotamia was indeed a patchwork of different ethnicities, modes of production and models of social organization. Whoever wanted to establish an imperial overlordship over the political jungle that was Mesopotamia, had no alternative but to approach it with the instruments of indirect rule” See Sommer, 2013, 41.

in Tacitus' *Ann.* 15.1–2).¹⁴⁴ In fact, only Manisaros is said to show his own initiative in going over to the Roman side, but this may be interpreted as either his own decision taken for personal political gain or a necessity resulted from Osroes' negative action towards him. In either case, such behavior would have not been unheard of in the history of the Roman-Parthian conflicts.

Furthermore, after the conquest of Mesopotamia, the sources speak about the Romans' final attack towards Ctesiphon, and Adiabene again appears in this context.¹⁴⁵

- 1 – in the spring (using portable boats made from the woods in the vicinity of Nisibis due to the lack of suitable trees near the Tigris) Trajan bridged the Tigris opposite the Gordyaeen Mountains, despite the resistance on the other side of the river, crossed over, and gained possession of the whole of Adiabene (Xiph. 236, 7–238 = Cass. Dio 68.26.1–3).¹⁴⁶
- 2 – after the statement mentioned above, the source (Xiph. 238, 7–11 = Cass. Dio 68.26.4) goes on to deliver a short ethnographical passage about Adiabene (the mention of Nineveh, Arbela, and Gaugamela as the cities of Adiabene once conquered by Alexander the Great).¹⁴⁷ It next speaks about the Romans reaching Babylon (Xiph. 238, 11–14 = Cass. Dio 68.26.4),¹⁴⁸ Trajan seeing the eye-catching sources of the asphalt (which were famous as the construction material for the walls of Babylon), Trajan's plans of moving Roman ships from the Euphrates to the Tigris via a channel, but finally dragging them overland to the Tigris and so reaching Ctesiphon, which was finally captured (Xiph. 238, 15–239 = Cass. Dio 68.27.1–28.3).¹⁴⁹

Generally speaking, the topographical sequence mentioned above provided for a great deal of controversy. Namely, Trajan's itinerary first mentions several places along the Tigris, but at some point the itinerary switches to places located along the Euphrates. On the one hand, the crossing point of the Tigris is clearly located in Gordyene; the mention of Nineveh, Gaugamela, and Arbela points to a route along the eastern bank of the Tigris (but it may also be derived from an ethnographical passage used in the sources of Dio). The mention of the sources of naphtha is controversial. It may refer to the same sources as visited by Alexander the Great: according to Curt. Ruf. 5.1.16, they were

¹⁴⁴ Marciak 2014a, 250.

¹⁴⁵ See Lepper 1948, 9–10.

¹⁴⁶ Boussevain 1901, 213–214.

¹⁴⁷ Boussevain 1901, 214.

¹⁴⁸ Boussevain 1901, 214.

¹⁴⁹ Boussevain 1901, 215–216.

located three days' march south of the battlefield at Gaugamela, which can most likely be identified as the bitumen sources near Kirkuk (eastern bank of the Tigris).¹⁵⁰ On the other hand, the bitumen sources located on the south bank of the Euphrates near Hit were equally famous in ancient times (see Herodotus 1.179).¹⁵¹ Likewise, there can be no doubt that Trajan's idea of moving his fleet from the Euphrates to the Tigris before the final assault on Ctesiphon makes any sense only if the Romans were proceeding along the Euphrates.¹⁵² Furthermore, it should be noted that Trajan's itinerary along the Euphrates is also strongly suggested by Ammianus who, in writing about Julian's expedition along the Euphrates in 363 CE, tells us that Julian took the same path as his predecessor, Trajan.¹⁵³

Thus, it is clear that the current itinerary is confused by mixing two distinct itineraries, one along the Tigris and another along the Euphrates. This situation has been explained by a general assumption that the Roman attack moved from two directions, along the Tigris (through Adiabene) and along the Euphrates.¹⁵⁴ It has been speculated that Trajan let part of his troops cross the Tigris in Gordyene, and then personally returned to Nisibis from where he commanded another group of forces down the Euphrates.¹⁵⁵

At what point can we date the Romans' activity in Adiabene? The chronology of Trajan's campaign belongs to one of the most disputed and in fact unresolved issues of the Roman history in the East. Namely, the sources do not provide a continuous narrative. Consequently, it is hard to interpret isolated events and fix the sequences of events mentioned in the fragmentary transmission of ancient sources. Generally speaking, it is widely accepted that Trajan left Rome in the autumn of 113 CE (most likely 27th October)¹⁵⁶ and arrived

150 Forbes 1955, 36–37; Lightfoot 1990, 120.

151 Guey 1937, 113; Lepper 1948, 134, Lightfoot 1990, 120.

152 Lepper 1948, 132–133.

153 Lightfoot 1990, 120. Trajan's presence on the Euphrates appears to be also corroborated by the discovery of the triumphal arch built there in his honor. For the arch, see Gould 1933.

154 Guey 1937, 113–114; Lepper 1948, 133–136.

155 In turn, Lightfoot 1990, 120 is skeptical about the Romans' conquest of Adiabene: "it is impossible to tell from the available sources how far the Roman forces penetrated into Adiabene after the opposed crossing of the Tigris, although it has often been assumed, on the basis of Cass. Dio 68.26.4, that the whole of the kingdom was overrun ... What is certain, however, is that these references cannot be taken as proof that the Romans advanced far into Adiabene or that they marched from there down to Babylon and so on to Ctesiphon."

156 Longden 1931, 1; Guey 1937, 39; Lepper 1948, 30.

in Antioch at the beginning of 114 CE (possibly 7th January),¹⁵⁷ but scholars are divided on the question as to whether Trajan accomplished his conquests in two or in three campaigns. Accordingly, some scholars date Trajan's conquest of Armenia and Mesopotamia to 114 CE and his invasion of Adiabene and Ctesiphon in 115 CE.¹⁵⁸ Alternatively, Trajan's campaigns in the East can be divided into three successive campaigns: conquest of Armenia in 114 CE, conquest of Mesopotamia in 115 CE, and the invasion of Adiabene and Ctesiphon only in 116 CE.¹⁵⁹

In this study, the second option is preferred: it is held that Trajan needed three years to reach Ctesiphon. Two main problems with this option are answered in the following way: it was necessary to consolidate new gains in Armenia and Mesopotamia,¹⁶⁰ as the two countries were set to become Roman provinces. Furthermore, the four imperial salutations (VIII, VIIII, X, XI) received by Trajan in the course of 115 CE (the number of which was considered, by scholars in favor of only two campaigns, to be too high for the whole of the campaigning season in a country such as Mesopotamia)¹⁶¹ can tentatively be assigned to some conquests of local cities and peoples in Mesopotamia: Nisibis, Singara, Cardueni, Marcomedi, Batnae, Anthemousia, and Adenystrae.¹⁶²

For our purposes, the most important issue is the claim of two Byzantine writers that Trajan created three new provinces: Armenia, Mesopotamia, and Assyria. On this basis, many scholars claim that Trajan created the province of Adiabene.¹⁶³

This statement is essentially based on the testimony of two ancient writers, Eutropius and Festus, who created their works *Breviarium historiae Romanae* and *Breviarium rerum gestarum populi Romani*, respectively, in the fourth century CE.

Let us give the voice to Eutropius first.¹⁶⁴

157 Lepper 1948, 30; Lightfoot 1990, 115.

158 Longden 1931; Henderson 1949; Dillemann 1962, 276–286.

159 Guey 1937, 39–120; Lepper 1948, 95–96; Lightfoot 1990.

160 Lepper 1948, 99–105.

161 See Lepper 1948, 44; Henderson 1949, 124–125; Dillemann 1962, 281–282; Lightfoot 1990, 118.

162 See Guey 1937, 70–77; Kienast 1996, 123.

163 Mommsen 1885, 400; Fraenkel 1893, 360; Longden 1931, 13–14; Guey 1937, 79–80; Henderson 1949, 125–126; Magie 1950, 608; Dillemann 1962, 287–289; Colledge 1967, 54–55; Luttwak 1976, 110; Bertinelli 1976, 17–22; Chaumont 1976, 140; Eilers 1983, 496; Gregory, Kennedy 1985, 118; Hauser 2013c.

164 The English translation follows Lightfoot 1990, 121–122.

He (Trajan) advanced as far as the fringes of India and the Red Sea (i.e. the Persian Gulf). He also created three provinces, Armenia, Assyria and Mesopotamia, including those tribes whose lands stretch as far as Madena ...

EUTROP. 8.3.2¹⁶⁵

He (Hadrian), envious of Trajan's military glory, immediately abandoned the three provinces that Trajan had added and recalled the armies from Assyria, Mesopotamia and Armenia, wanting the imperial frontier to be the Euphrates.

EUTROP. 8.6.2¹⁶⁶

Parallel statements can be found in Festus' *Breviarium*:

Armenia, Mesopotamia, Assyria and Arabia were made into provinces by Trajan, and the eastern frontier was established on the banks of the Tigris. But Hadrian, who succeeded Trajan, being jealous of Trajan's military glory, gave up Armenia, Mesopotamia and Assyria of his own accord, wanting the border between the Persians and the Romans to be the Euphrates.

FEST. 14.3¹⁶⁷

He (Trajan) created the provinces of Armenia, Mesopotamia and Assyria, which lies between the Tigris and Euphrates and is made fertile, like Egypt, by perennial streams.

FEST. 20.3¹⁶⁸

165 Santini 1979, 50: "usque ad Indiae fines et mare Rubrum [Traianus] accessit atque ibi tres provincias fecit, Armeniam, Assyriam, Mesopotamiam, cum his gentibus quae Madenam attingunt."

166 Santini 1979, 51: "qui [Hadrianus] Traiani gloriae invidens statim provincias tres reliquit, quas Traianus addiderat, et de Assyria, Mesopotamia, Armenia revocavit exercitus ac finem imperii esse voluit Euphraten."

167 Foerster 1874, 14: "... et per Traianum Armenia, Mesopotamia, Assyria et Arabia provinciae factae sunt ac limes orientalis supra ripas Tigridis est institutus. Sed Hadrianus qui successit Traiano, invidens Traiani gloriae, sponte sua Armeniam, Mesopotamiam, Assyriam reddidit ac medium inter Persas et Romanos Euphraten esse voluit."

168 Foerster 1874, 18: "Provincias fecit Armeniam, Assyriam, Mesopotamiam, quae inter Tigridem atque Euphraten sita inriguis amnibus instar Aegypti fecundatur."

As we can see, the sources do not explicitly mention Adiabene, but Assyria, next to Armenia and Mesopotamia. Therefore, the first issue to deal with is the location and geographical extent of the toponyms in question, with Assyria in the first place.¹⁶⁹

It appears that there have been two main options among scholars concerning the identification of Trajan's Assyria.

Many scholars understand Trajan's Assyria as Adiabene, that is, as the territory between the Great and Little Zab.¹⁷⁰ In this case, a basic connection with the center of the Assyrian Empire (Old-, Middle-, Neo-Assyrian kingdoms from approximately 2500 to 605 BCE) has been suggested, including the cities Ashur, Nineveh, and Nimrud. Additionally, the connection has been noted between the term Assyria and Adiabene which is attested in several Greco-Roman sources.

Namely, several sources explicitly write that Adiabene was *once* called Assyria (Pliny the Elder *HN* 5.66; Dio 68.26.1–4; Amm. Marc. 23.6.20–22). Next to this linguistic tradition, there is a geographical connection—several ancient sources perceive Adiabene as (at least) part of Assyria understood as a larger geographical area. Namely, Tacitus (*Ann.* 12.13) calls Nineveh the capital of Assyria, Pliny the Elder (*HN* 6.42) speaks of Adiabene as a region where the land of the Assyrians begins, Ptolemy (*Geogr.* 6.1.1) mentions Adiabene as part of Assyria which is in turn understood as a large area between Armenia to the north, Mesopotamia to the west, Susiane to the south, and Media to the

169 *Madena* has been understood in various ways: as the Armenian region *Motene* (Lepper 1948, 14, 138), a transliteration of the ordinary word for province in all the local languages (Henderson 1949, 126), and, on the basis of *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, as *Media* (Maricq 1958, 306, n. 5 and 1959, 261, followed by Lightfoot 1990, 121). Concerning the extent of the province of Mesopotamia, no precise clues can be found in ancient sources. The coins present an image of two rivers, which gives only a very general idea which actually conforms to the etymology of the term “between the rivers.” Otherwise, only general considerations of geopolitical nature can be offered. In this context, it has usually been suggested that the frontier of the province of Mesopotamia followed the line of Khabur and Sinjar Mountains (likewise in the time of Septimius Severus). See Guey 1937, 78; Lepper 1948, 148; Bivar 1983, 88. However, if Assyria should be equated with Adiabene, then Trajan's Mesopotamia would have extended down to Mesene, which became Trajan's vassal state in 116 CE. See Maricq 1958, 260–261, n. 1.

170 Mommsen 1885, 400; Fraenkel 1893, 360; Longden 1931, 13–14; Guey 1937, 79–80; Henderson 1949, 125–126; Magie 1950, 608; Dillemann 1962, 287–289; Colledge 1967, 54–55; Luttwak 1976, 110; Bertinelli 1976, 17–22; Chaumont 1976, 140; Eilers 1983, 496; Gregory, Kennedy 1985, 118; Hauser 2013c.

east. Cass. Dio 68.26.1–4 also perceives Adiabene as a district of Assyria with its chief cities—Nineveh, Arbela, and Gaugamela.

However, according to some scholars, Assyria corresponds to Babylonia and can be located between the Euphrates and Tigris rivers.¹⁷¹ To support this identification, it has been noted that Persian sources which, in the third century at least, understand Assyria not as the heartland of the once Assyrian kingdom in northern Mesopotamia (known to the Persians as Arbāyestān), but as the area of Babylonia in southern Mesopotamia (known to the Persians as Asūrestān).¹⁷² Indeed, *Res Gestae Divi Saporī* inscribed on the walls of the so-called Ka'baye Zardosht near Naqsh-e Rostam clearly distinguishes between Adiabene, Assyria (Asūrestān), and Arabia (Arbāyestān). It has also been argued that later Roman sources, especially Ammianus, as well as Eutropius and Festus, share this geographical notion of Assyria.

Ammianus can indeed distinguish between Adiabene and Assyria. This distinction is evident when he describes the choice of itinerary made by Emperor Julian's troops in 363 CE: to go through Adiabene and the Tigris region ("laeva per Adiabenam et Tigridem") or through Assyria and the Euphrates region ("dextra per Assyrios et Euphraten" (23.3.1). Accordingly, several Assyrian cities recalled by Ammianus—Babylon, Ctesiphon, Seleucia and Apamea—cannot be found in northern but in southern Mesopotamia (23.6.23). In other places, Ammianus' use of Assyria can also be better understood if it applies to southern and not northern Mesopotamia (see Amm. Marc. 23.6.15; 23.6.23; 25.4.13; 24.8.4 or 25.6.11–13).¹⁷³ Similarly, Eutropius locates Seleucia (8.10.2) and Ctesiphon in Assyria (10.16.1), the military activity of Emperor Julian is also placed by Eutropius in Assyria (10.16.1), which clearly points to southern Mesopotamia.¹⁷⁴ Concerning Festus, most striking is his enumeration of Trajan's new provinces which (likewise in Eutropius), if taken as geographically orientated, gives a clear picture of countries located from the north to the south—Armenia, Mesopotamia, and Assyria.¹⁷⁵

All in all, it appears that the geographical notions of Eutropius and Festus should be understood in light of other contemporary sources. In this light, the geographical attribution of Assyria to northern Mesopotamia is obsolete;

171 Maricq 1958, 304–305, nn. 4–5; Maricq 1959, 257–260; Millar 1970, 117; Bivar 1983, 89; Kettenhofen 1986, 138–146; Lightfoot 1990, 121–123; Hartmann 2010, 616.

172 Maricq 1958, 304–305, nn. 4–5; Maricq 1959, 257–260. For earlier references to northern Mesopotamia as the land connected with Arabs, see Donner 1986, 1–16, esp. 4, 13.

173 Lightfoot 1990, 122.

174 Maricq 1959, 260.

175 Maricq 1959, 260.

the geographical term Assyria in fact referred to southern Mesopotamia. Therefore, given the fact that the fourth century sources understand Assyria as a region in southern Mesopotamia, and the fact that the province of Mesopotamia did not extend beyond the Tigris, it appears that Adiabene did not have to be included in Trajan's new imperial organization, provided that the province of Assyria would have been created in the first place.

Indeed, it has also been argued on two grounds that Trajan's province of Assyria was not even created at all.¹⁷⁶ First, Eutropius and Festus are later sources, and their testimonies are isolated, so one may suspect them of not delivering the current state of affairs in the early second century CE, but rather reflecting the propagandic tradition at the court of Valens around 370 CE. Second, it has been noted that there is hardly any direct epigraphic or numismatic evidence for the creation of the province of Assyria.¹⁷⁷

This is all the more striking if we realize that relevant epigraphic and numismatic evidence does exist for Trajan's establishment of new provinces elsewhere—in Dacia and, above all, for the provinces of Armenia and Mesopotamia. To be precise, as for Trajan's Dacia, both the conquest and the creation of the new province have been proclaimed on two distinct issues of coinage (DA. CAP.S.P.Q.R.OPTIMO PRINCIPI S.C. and DACIA.AUGUST.PROVINCIA S.C.).¹⁷⁸ The establishment of provinces of Armenia and Mesopotamia has also been proclaimed on Trajan's coins, dated to 116 CE, with the inscription: ARMENIA ET MESOPOTAMIA IN POTESTATEM P.R.REDACTAE S.C.¹⁷⁹ Concerning Trajan's Armenia (which became part of a large province encompassing Cappadocia, Lesser Armenia and Greater Armenia), we know of two officials appointed by Trajan for Greater Armenia: the office of *legatus* (in the rank of *consul*) held by L. Catilius Severus¹⁸⁰ and the office of *procurator*

¹⁷⁶ By contrast, see Kettenhofen 1995b, 290, n. 25 who pays attention to the inscriptions from Seleucia published in 1985 and holds the view that the findings indicate a more developed Roman presence in southern Mesopotamia after 116 CE than was previously developed. See Potter 1991. In short, the inscriptions appear to suggest that Mesene remained independent from the Parthians and was a Roman client state between 117 and 151 CE. This geopolitical situation could be interpreted as a long-term result of Trajan's conquest of Assyria. Furthermore, Potter 1991, 282–283 and n. 14 points to Fronto's description of Trajan setting *protoria* (tolls) for both the Tigris and the Euphrates in Mesene (*Princ. Hist.* 17).

¹⁷⁷ See Lightfoot 1990, 121–125.

¹⁷⁸ RIC 288 (nos. 620 and 621).

¹⁷⁹ RIC 289 (no. 642).

¹⁸⁰ ILS 1041. See also Chaumont 1976, 138–139; Lightfoot 1990, 123, n. 46.

Augusti Armeniae Maioris (attributed to T. Haterius Nepos).¹⁸¹ In the case of Mesopotamia, a milestone of Trajan is known which was found on the route from Nisibis to Singara (reportedly in the village Karsi).¹⁸² It should be stressed that no comparable evidence exists for Trajan's province of Assyria.

Above all, there are no archaeological remains to indicate a Roman presence in northern Mesopotamia on the east bank of the Tigris, which belonged to the core territory of Adiabene in the second century CE. First, easternmost Roman garrisons in northern Mesopotamia include Singara, 'Ain Sinu, and Seh Qubba (see chapter 8.2.6).¹⁸³ The archaeologically attested occupation of these sites have been dated only to the Severan period (after 199 CE).¹⁸⁴ At any rate, none of these sites are located in Adiabene proper, and they all represent remains of Roman fortifications from the late second or third centuries CE. In this light, it appears that in the time of Trajan Roman military installations did not reach beyond the line of the Khabur River and the Sinjar Mountains.¹⁸⁵ In turn, on the west bank of the Tigris comparable Roman military installations (dated to third and fourth centuries CE) appear to have stopped at the site of Bezabde, that is, on the territory of Gordyene/Zabdikene (see chapter 5.4.3). Slight remains of Roman objects from Nineveh rather reflect its capture and short-term occupation than witness to any long-term Roman settlement in the city (see chapter 8.2.3).

To conclude, Trajan's Parthian campaign clearly affected the geopolitical situation of Adiabene in northern Mesopotamia, as Mebarsapes, King of Adiabene lost several possessions on the west bank of the Tigris. It is also possible that Adiabene was ravaged by some expeditionary Roman contingent on its way to Ctesiphon, but, given the mixed itinerary of the Roman legions on their way to the Parthian capital, it is also possible that such an attack never took place as the sources may have confused Trajan's attack with traditions stemming from Alexander the Great's campaign. At any rate, there is no

181 ILS 1338. See also Chaumont 1976, 138–139; Lightfoot 1990, 123, n. 46.

182 Cagnat 1927, 53.

183 Importantly, a number of fortified complexes located between Sinjar, Mosul, and Hatra, considered previously to be Roman fortifications, are nowadays interpreted as Parthian (possibly Hatrene) *castella* from the 2nd century CE. See Hauser 1995, 117–118; Isaac 2013, 25, n. 8; Gregoratti 2013, 48–50; Hauser 2013a, 131. For the previous 'Roman' identification, see Gregory, Kennedy 1985, 67–77.

184 D. Oates 1968, 70–92, esp. 71; Ball 2003, 80; and Ball 2015, 18 show that it is only a matter of speculation that the Severan occupation of these sites may have followed an earlier occupation stemming from the second century CE (not only would Trajan's time come into play in this case, but also the Antonine period from 164–166 CE).

185 Guey 1937, 78; Lepper 1948, 148; D. Oates 1968, 71; Bivar 1983, 88.

evidence for either a long-term occupation of the territory of Adiabene (not even in Nineveh) or the creation of a province that would include any of the territory of Adiabene on the east bank of the Tigris.

9.4 Lucius Verus

Although Adiabene is not explicitly mentioned in ancient sources in the context of Lucius Verus' Eastern campaigns (see below),¹⁸⁶ the Roman campaigns in the East in 163–166 CE provide important background for later developments under Septimius Severus; what is more, in one case, Adiabene may have been indirectly involved in the fighting.¹⁸⁷

This time the war was initiated by the Parthian side (under the Parthian king, Vologases IV), which, apparently taking advantage of the change of power in Rome (9 March 161 CE—Antoninus Pius' death and the succession of his two adopted sons, Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus).¹⁸⁸ The Parthians launched a sudden attack from two directions—one Parthian army attacked Armenia, and another invaded Kappadokia. In the first case, the Parthians are reported to reach Elegeia where the Roman army was completely destroyed and as a result Armenia was conquered by the Parthians who installed a certain Pakoros as the king of Armenia (Cass. Dio 71.2.1).¹⁸⁹ The second Parthian army crossed the Euphrates and scattered one Roman legion under Lucius Attidius Cornelianus (SHA *Aur.* 8.6; Cass. Dio 71.2.1).¹⁹⁰

The Romans' response to the Parthian invasion is difficult to reconstruct with precision, as the several available sources neither provide us with a continuous narrative nor sketch a precious itinerary of Roman legions; in fact, the sources only briefly enumerate the main events and Roman successes of the era.

It is generally held that we can tentatively distinguish several geographical and chronological stages: invasion of Armenia, invasion of Mesopotamia, Roman attack along the Euphrates to Ctesiphon, and attack on Media

186 This is in contrast to some scholars who mention Adiabene next to Osrhoene as the subject of Roman invasion and occupation: Bertinelli 1976, 28; Schippmann 1980, 66; Dąbrowa 1984a, 154.

187 For the historical context of Lucius Verus' Parthian war, see Magie 1950, 660–662, 1529–1532; Birley 1987, 160–195; Olbrycht 2010a, 197–198.

188 Magie 1950, 660; Birley 1987, 160; M. Schmitt 1997, 65; Olbrycht 2010a, 198.

189 Magie 1950, 660; M. Schmitt 1997, 65; Olbrycht 2010a, 198.

190 Magie 1950, 660; M. Schmitt 1997, 66; Olbrycht 2010a, 198.

Atropatene.¹⁹¹ To be precise, in 163 CE a Roman army under Priscus attacked Armenia and captured its capital Artaxata which enabled the Romans to install a new king of Armenia, Sohaemus (SHA *Aur.* 9.1; Lucius' cognomen *Armeniacus* is dated to the autumn of 163 CE, the coins *Rex Armeniis Datus*—to 164 CE¹⁹²).¹⁹³ In 164–165 CE another Roman army (under Avidius Cassius) crossed the Euphrates, attacked Osrhoene (including Anthemousia, Edessa, and Nisibis) where it also met reinforcements from Priscus' troops which had entered Mesopotamia across the Tauros from Armenia (most likely via the Bitlis pass).¹⁹⁴ Next, Cassius' major Roman attack proceeded along the Euphrates (via Dura-Europos) and led to the capture of Seleucia and Ctesiphon in late 165 CE or early 166 CE (Cass. Dio 71.2.3; SHA *Ver.* 7.1–2; 8.1–2; Fest. 21.1; Eutrop. 8.10.2).¹⁹⁵ It appears that the capture of the Parthian capital ended the major part of the war.¹⁹⁶ However, Media Atropatene is also mentioned among Verus' achievements in literary sources. This separate campaign apparently led to the adoption of cognomen *Medicus* on coins by both Verus and Marcus Aurelius in 166 CE (between the summer and December).¹⁹⁷ What is more, the sequence of *cognomina* in the extant epigraphic evidence shows that the cognomen *Medicus* was precisely adopted by both emperors between 30 April and 23 August 166 CE.¹⁹⁸

It is most likely due to the mention of Media by SHA *Ver.* 7.1–2 that several scholars recall Adiabene among Verus' military and political objectives on the Parthian campaign:

And when he came to Antioch, there he gave himself wholly to riotous living. His generals, meanwhile, Statius Priscus, Avidius Cassius, and Martius Verus for four years conducted the war until they advanced to Babylon and Media, and recovered Armenia. He, however, gained the

191 See Magie 1950, 660–662, 1529–1532; Birley 1987, 160–195.

192 Kneissl 1969, 98; Mattingly, Sydenham 1930, 254–255.

193 Magie 1950, 661; M. Schmitt 1997, 66; Olbrycht 2010a, 198–199.

194 Magie 1950, 661; M. Schmitt 1997, 66; Olbrycht 2010a, 199.

195 Seleucia struck its coins until December 195 CE (McDowell 85–86, 234). The adoption of the cognomen *Parthicus Maximus* is dated to August–December 165 CE for Verus and between December 165 CE and the summer of 166 CE for Aurelius. See Mattingly, Sydenham 1930, 257–258. Early 166 CE is suggested by Kneissl 1969, 96–97 and apparently Magie 1950, 1531.

196 Magie 1950, 662; By contrast, Birley 1987, 195 writes about “the final demonstration of Roman might.”

197 See Mattingly, Sydenham 1930, 288, no. 940, 328, no. 1455.

198 Kneissl 1969, 97; Alföldy, Halfmann 1979, 206.

names Armeniacus, Parthicus, and Medicus; and these were proffered to Marcus also, who was then living at Rome.¹⁹⁹

It should, however, be stressed that neither ancient source explicitly recalls Adiabene in this context.²⁰⁰ Remarkably, some scholars write about the Romans crossing the Tigris and invasion of Media Atropatene.²⁰¹ This interpretation implies that the Roman attack followed from Mesopotamia. If Mesopotamia is to be understood as northern Mesopotamia, then the Romans would have crossed Adiabene on their way to Media Atropatene (the Keli-Shin pass in the Zagros). However, if the Romans started their advance from Ctesiphon, then Adiabene would not have necessarily been on their way to Media Atropatene (e.g. the Šahrzūr plain). Above all, Media Atropatene may have been reached by the Romans from Armenia where the Roman legions were stationed at that time. In this context, it is worth recalling David Magie's assessment of the attack on Media as not a full-scale invasion but rather a "penetration" by "some expeditionary force."²⁰² Otherwise, the connection with Osrhoene (geographical proximity?) may lie behind other scholars' mention of Adiabene.²⁰³ However, the core of Adiabene lay east of the Tigris, and (as we could infer from the analysis of routes taken by Trajan's troops) the capture of Osrhoene (e.g., Edessa, Nisibis, Anthemousia) did not necessarily mean a direct contact with Adiabene, the less so the invasion of Adiabene *proper*.

At any rate, the war of 161–166 CE marks a turning point in the history of the competition between the Romans and the Parthians in Northern Mesopotamia: Osrhoene became a Roman client kingdom (likewise again Armenia),²⁰⁴ and the Romans kept garrisons in several Mesopotamian cities, namely in Edessa, Nisibis, and Dura-Europos.²⁰⁵ In this sense, other (still) Parthian regions of

199 Magie 1921, 220–221.

200 The following sources have been consulted: Cass. Dio 71.1.1–71.3.1; Eutrop. 8.10.2; Fest. 21.1; Lucian, *Hist. conscr.* 20–21; Oros. 7.15.1–3; SHA *Aur.* 8.6–12, 9.1–2, 20.2; SHA *Ver.* 7.1–3, 8.1–4; Jer. *Chron.* a2180; MX 2.24; *Chron. Arbela* (Kawerau 1985, 30). For the sources (but not their interpretation), see Dąbrowa 1984a, 154, n. 24 and Hackl, Jacobs, Weber 2010, 74, n. 219.

201 Birley 2000, 164.

202 Magie 1950, 662.

203 This is perhaps the case with Dąbrowa 1984a, 154 (who dates the occupation of Osrhoene and Adiabene to 164 CE).

204 And yet, see Ross 2001, 46–49 who, while acknowledging that "Roman troops were apparently present in some force in the region, and in Nisibis to the east," states that "the precise status of Edessa and Osrhoene after the campaigns of Lucius Verus ... is not totally clear." In Ross's view, it fluctuated between submission and attempt to regain independence.

205 Olbrycht 1990, 199; Hackl, Jacobs, Weber 2010, 74; Sommer 2013, 43; Gregoratti 2013, 53.

Mesopotamia, Adiabene, and Hatra in particular, became more exposed to Roman attacks due to their geographical proximity.²⁰⁶

9.5 Septimius Severus

Adiabene is definitely mentioned in ancient sources in the context of Septimius Severus' reign, especially in the aftermath of the domestic wars in the Roman Empire which started in the year 193 CE, widely known as the *Year of the Five Emperors*, since it witnessed the rise of as many as five claimants for the Roman throne: Pertinax, Didius Julianus, Pescennius Niger, Clodius Albinus, and Septimius Severus.²⁰⁷ To be precise, we hear of Adiabene in the context of Severus' competition for imperial power with Pescennius Niger who was proclaimed Emperor by Eastern legions and supported by several Eastern kingdoms in Mesopotamia, i.e., Adiabene.

Our knowledge of Severus' struggle with Niger and the subsequent campaigns (*expeditio Parthica*) in the East is mainly based on the text of Cassius Dio (in Xiphilinus' transmission), with the addition of occasional brief references in other literary sources (*Scriptores Historiae Augustae*; Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 20; Herodian; Eutropius) as well as the epigraphic and numismatic evidence. It is the text of Dio, however, which is the most extensive narrative of Severus' Eastern campaigns.²⁰⁸

Niger's legions were decisively defeated by Severus' troops at Issos. Niger himself found refuge in Antioch which was, however, captured by Severus' troops soon after the battle. Niger was seized and executed during his escape in the outskirts of Antioch (Herodian 3.4.6) or on the bank of the Euphrates (Cass. Dio 74.8.3). It was only after the Issos battle and the subsequent capture of Antioch—when Severus' troops reached so far eastwards—that Severus could directly deal with Eastern supporters of Niger. The dating of the battle at Issos has been a matter of controversy. Scholars have dated it to either the spring of 194 CE²⁰⁹ or (less likely) the autumn (early winter) of 194 CE.²¹⁰

206 Thus Isaac 2013, 25, who, however, appears to take into consideration the possibility of a fraudulent claim on the side of Severus.

207 For the historical context, see Magie 1950, 671–673, 1538–1542; Ziegler 1964, 129–132; Platnauer 1918b, 74–98; Birley 1988, 108–120; Butcher 2003, 48; Sommer 2005, 239–240, n. 58.

208 For the question of sources for the history of Septimius Severus, see Platnauer 1918b, 1–22.

209 Harrer 1920, 168; Murphy 1945, 2–4; Magie 1950, 1539–1540; Herz 1975, 36; Kienast 1996, 156.

210 Platnauer 1918a, 152; Hasebroek 1921, 61; Platnauer 1918b, 91.

In the latter case, the earliest possible date of Severus' engagement east of the Euphrates is only the beginning of 195 CE, while the first date makes 194 CE (e.g., autumn or early winter) theoretically possible for Severus' campaigns in the East. However, the numismatic evidence undoubtedly points to 195 CE (see below). To be precise, Severus' policies and campaign in the East took place in two stages. The first occurred in 195 CE, immediately after the defeat of Niger; the second in 197–199 CE, after Severus had defeated Clodius Albinus (another competitor for imperial power) in Gaul and after the Parthian invasion of Mesopotamia.

In light of Dio, it was only during the first Eastern campaign of Severus, that is, in 195 CE after the defeat of Niger (194 CE), when Severus campaigned against Adiabene. Let us give voice to Dio himself (75.1.1–3 = Exc. U^G 69):

... Severus, out of a desire for glory, made a campaign against the barbarians—against the Osrhoeni [Osroeni], the Adiabeni, and the Arabs. The Osrhoeni [Osroeni] and the Adiabeni had revolted and laid siege to Nisibis, and had been defeated by Severus; but now, after Niger's death, they sent an embassy to him, not, indeed, to ask his pardon, as if they had committed any wrong, but to demand reciprocal favors, pretending that they had acted as they had on his behalf; for they claimed it was for his sake that they had destroyed the soldiers who favored Niger's cause. They also sent him some gifts and promised the captives and whatever spoils there were still left; yet they were unwilling either to abandon the forts that they had captured or to receive garrisons, but actually demanded the removal from their country of such garrisons as still remained. It was this that led to the present war ...²¹¹

In 75.1.1–3, Dio lists Eastern supporters of Niger. The mention of the Osrhoeni and the Adiabeni points to the involvement of kingdoms of Osrhoene and Adiabene on the side of Niger²¹² and their attempt to capture Nisibis.²¹³ Although Dio uses only ethnonyms, in other places of his narrative, as well in other sources, we learn of either anonymous kings or specific rulers of these kingdoms (Abgar of Edessa (Abgar VIII) in Dio 79.16.2 and Barsemias of Hatra in

²¹¹ Cary 1927, 195–197.

²¹² Magie 1950, 672.

²¹³ According to Sommer 2005, 240, the reason was that Nisibis apparently possessed a Roman garrison. Other scholars (e.g. Magie 1950, 1541) were more cautious, but also more unspecified on the issue: Nisibis was attacked by Niger's allies, because it was "friendly towards Severus."

Her. 3.1.3). What is more, it has been suggested that local rulers in Mesopotamia in fact acted on the orders of the Parthian king, Vologases v (Her. 3.1.2).²¹⁴ In addition to this, from the Roman perspective, the world of local rulers east of the Euphrates (see Cass. Dio 75.2.1 and 77(78).12.1^a; Her. 3.4.7) was essentially Parthian (at least in cultural terms).²¹⁵ Dio's mention of the Arabs may be problematic. There were several geopolitical and ethnic entities in the region which could be labeled in this way (see Trajan's campaigns). While the first candidate which comes to one's mind (as the only Arabian toponym explicitly mentioned in our sources) is Hatra,²¹⁶ this identification is problematic, because Hatra has never been conquered by Severus.²¹⁷ Therefore, Dio's Arabs, presented as being defeated by the Romans, may rather be (a collective) label for any of the anonymous rulers of the small local geopolitical entities, such as those known from Trajan's campaigns.²¹⁸

The campaign against Niger's Eastern supporters took place only after the battle at Issos and the capture of Antioch (194 CE). Thus, Severus' move against Niger's Eastern supporters could take place at the beginning of 195 at the earliest.²¹⁹ Perhaps the spring of 195 CE rather than the winter of 194/195 CE was the earliest possible time for Severus to move his troops across the Euphrates.²²⁰ Indeed, it has been pointed to the fact that the inscriptions *IMP IIII* (given to Severus due to his victory at Issos) and *Trib. Pot. III* still appear on some coins minted in 195 CE.²²¹ In turn, the Eastern campaigns must have been finished by the autumn of 195 CE. A tombstone of a soldier of *Legio X Gemina* who had died "returning from Parthia" is known from Ancyra and can be dated to 3 September 195 CE.²²²

More specific references to Roman military maneuvers east of the Euphrates are given by Dio in two separate accounts: 75.2.3 (Xiphil. 303.21–304) and 75.3.2 (Xiphil. 304.8–22). According to the first account:

... afterwards [after crossing the Euphrates] Severus reached Nisibis, and tarrying there himself, sent Lateranus, Candidus, and Laetus in various

214 Hasebroek 1921, 73; Ziegler 1964, 129–131.

215 Hasebroek 1921, 75; Sommer 2005, 240.

216 Hauser 1998, 516; likewise Sommer 2005, 240; Edwell 2008, 22.

217 Thus Isaac 2013, 25, who, however, appears to take into consideration a possibility of the fraudulent claim on the side of Severus.

218 Likewise Ross 2001, 48.

219 Hasebroek 1921, 75; Fluss 1923, 1960; Platnauer 1918b, 93.

220 Platnauer 1918b, 91, 93.

221 Fluss 1923, 1960; Magie 1950, 1541.

222 AE 1941, 166 (pp. 54–55).

directions among the barbarians named; and these generals upon reaching their goals proceeded to lay waste the barbarians' land ...²²³

In turn, in 75.3.2 Dio mentions another campaign and the subsequent establishment of a Roman province:

... Severus again made three divisions of his army, and giving one to Laetus, one to Anullinus, and one to Probus, sent them against Arche; and they invaded it in three divisions and subdued it, yet not without difficulty. Severus bestowed some dignity upon Nisibis and entrusted the city to a knight. He used to declare that he had added a vast territory to the empire and had made it a bulwark of Syria ...²²⁴

According to some scholars, the campaigns mentioned in 75.2.3 took place only in Mesopotamia (west of the Tigris), while the campaigns recalled in 75.3.2 referred to Adiabene (east of the Tigris).²²⁵

However, as we can see, the first text, 75.2.3, is extremely general about the itineraries of Roman legions. It appears that the only clue may be that the Roman forces were divided into three separate contingents which may in turn suggest that they had to deal with several small-in-scale military objectives, e.g., capturing of regional strongholds which were later incorporated into Roman provinces (e.g. Rhesaina, Singara, etc.). In turn, our understanding of the Roman military campaign mentioned in Cass. Dio 75.3.2 is greatly hampered by the uncertainty concerning the key toponym, Ἀρχή. The reference has been considered to be corrupt and several emendations have been suggested, especially to Adiabene (Arbelitis) and Hatra,²²⁶ but neither is wholly satisfactory on purely linguistic grounds. However, if we should assume that the last sentence about the establishment of a Roman province remains in connection with the previous sentences about the Roman conquests, then neither Adiabene nor Hatra is a satisfactory solution, as neither became part of the

²²³ Cary 1927, 197.

²²⁴ Cary 1927, 199.

²²⁵ Hasebroek 1921, 77; Fluss 1923, 1961; probably Magie 1950, 673 too, who is however less specific: "The rest of northern Mesopotamia was reduced to subjection by Severus's generals, among whom were Claudius Candidus and Cornelius Anullinus. They appear to have defeated the "Arabs" of the region and even to have crossed the Tigris into Adiabene."

²²⁶ See Hasebroek 1921, 77; Cary 1927, 199, n. 2; Platnauer 1918b, 94–95, n. 6.

Roman province of Mesopotamia. Hatra is also unlikely given the trouble of Severus' campaigns against this city in 197–199 CE.²²⁷

Fortunately, the numismatic and epigraphic evidence sheds more light on Severus' campaigns. Namely, Severus' success was celebrated by the adoption of victory titles (*cognomina ex virtute*) including PARTHICUS ADIABENICUS and PARTHICUS ARABICUS. The titles appear on milestones,²²⁸ coins,²²⁹ and the famous arch of Septimius Severus constructed in the Forum Romanum (see Figures 75–76).²³⁰ Of special importance are the coins that appear on the issues marked by imperial salutations (IMPERATOR).²³¹ Namely, the *cognomina ex virtute* PARTHICUS ADIABENICUS and PARTHICUS ARABICUS are inscribed on the coins belonging to the issues marked by IMP V, IMP VI, and IMP VII,²³² which were all minted in the third tribunicial year of Septimius, that is, in 195 CE (see Figure 75).²³³ The fact that these titles appear together with three distinctive imperial salutations has been interpreted as a sign of “more trouble” and the fact that “the victories were probably hard won”²³⁴ or, to put it differently, that “the situation may have been more critical than would have

227 Hasebroek 1921, 78; Platnauer 1918b, 94–95, n. 6 who otherwise identifies Arche with *Asicha*, probably located on the east bank of the Euphrates, 18 km downstream from the confluence of the Khabur with the Euphrates. See Musil, 1927, 229.

228 See Murphy 1945, 80–87.

229 See Mattingly, Sydenham 1936, 60, 66, 94–99 and Mattingly 1950, lxxx (especially concerning IMP VI).

230 For the arch, see Brilliant 1967, esp. 92–95 and 172–182 and Bonanno 1976, 143–146.

231 What is more, the images of two captive Oriental rulers appear on the IMP IIII and IMP V issues, which, in popular opinion, have been understood as images of kings of Edessa and Adiabene (sometimes of Adiabene and, vaguely, of Arabia). By contrast, it has been shown by Marciak, Wójcikowski 2016 that the depictions of Oriental rulers on Septimius' coins are merely stereotypical images of what the Romans considered to be typically Oriental royal outfits, and consequently it is impossible to identify their ethnic identity only on the basis of their garments or to attribute the images to any specific rulers.

232 The fact that the *cognomina* also appear on two coins with IMP IIII has been explained by the assumption that the *cognomina* were assumed after the battle at Issos but before the official announcement in Rome of IMP V. See Magie 1950, 1541 and Platnauer 1918a, 150–151. The three distinctive imperial titles have been attributed by some scholars to the victories over three distinctive enemies—Osroene, Adiabene, and the Arabs. Thus Hasebroek 1921, 79–81; Murphy 1945, 4.

233 Mattingly, Sydenham 1936, 60–61; Platnauer 1918b, 96, n. 1; Murphy 1945, 2; Mattingly 1950, lxxx–lxxxi. The assumption of the *cognomina* in 195 CE is also confirmed by their appearance in a papyrus (a tax-receipt) dated 20 Thoth in Severus' third year of reign, that is, September 17, 195 CE. See Platnauer 1918a, 148–149; Harrer 1920, 158–159; Magie 1950, 1541.

234 Birley 1988, 116.

been imagined.”²³⁵ At any rate, the numismatic evidence shows that Adiabene must have indeed been included among Severus’ military enemies during the 195 CE campaigns. As for the cognomen ARABICUS, its interpretation is more problematic. It may indeed denote Osrhoene²³⁶ (although Dio differentiates between the Osrhoeni and the Arabs, but this does not have to refer to the epigraphical material), but it may also refer to anonymous Arabian geopolitical entities in the region (which were later incorporated into the province of Mesopotamia).²³⁷ Most likely, it should not be understood as the Arabs of Hatra,²³⁸ since the latter were not conquered by Severus.

Another campaign led by Severus in the East took place only after he had returned to both Rome and the Empire’s western provinces to deal with another opponent, Clodius Albinus. Let us give voice to Cass. Dio 76.9:

After this Severus made a campaign against the Parthians. For while he had been occupied with the civil wars they had taken advantage of their immunity and had captured Mesopotamia, whither they had made an expedition in full force. They had also come very near seizing Nisibis, and would have succeeded, had not Laetus, who was besieged there, saved the place. ... As the Parthians did not await his arrival but retired homeward (their leader was Vologases, whose brother was accompanying Severus), he constructed boats on the Euphrates and proceeded forward partly by sailing and partly by marching along the river. The boats thus built were exceedingly swift and speedy and well-constructed, for the forest along the Euphrates and that region in general afforded him an abundant supply of timber. Thus he soon had seized Seleucia and Babylon, both of which had been abandoned. Later, upon capturing Ctesiphon, he permitted the soldiers to plunder the entire city, and he slew a vast number of people, besides taking as many as a hundred thousand captives. He did not, however, pursue Vologases, nor even occupy Ctesiphon, but, just as if the sole purpose of his campaign had been to plunder this place, he was off again, owing partly to lack of acquaintance with the country and partly to the dearth of provisions. He returned by a different route, because the wood and fodder found on the outward march had

²³⁵ Mattingly, Sydenham 1936, 60.

²³⁶ Bayer 1734, 165; Günther 1922, 121; Chaumont 1987, 437–439.

²³⁷ Likewise (to some extent) Ross 2001, 48.

²³⁸ Hauser 1998, 516, who is followed by Sommer 2005, 240 (only tentatively) and Luther 2015, 286 and taken into consideration by Isaac 2013, 25.

been exhausted. Some of the soldiers made the return journey by land up the Tigris, and some on boats.²³⁹

As we can see, Adiabene is not mentioned in the context of Severus' expedition against the Parthians in 197–199 CE. Dio also reports that on his way back, the Romans unsuccessfully besieged the city of Hatra twice (Cass. Dio 76.11.1).²⁴⁰ Generally speaking, it is widely accepted that the capture of the Parthian capital took place by the end of 197 CE (the cognomen *Part[hicus] Max[imus]* and *Vict[oriae] Parthicae*), and later two unsuccessful sieges of Hatra (198–199 CE).²⁴¹

The events of Severus' Parthian campaign in 197–199 CE are not directly connected with Adiabene. However, in an indirect way, some conclusions can be drawn. First, unlike in 115 CE, the Roman attacked from only one direction (along the Euphrates); apparently, there was no danger of Parthia/Adiabene counterattack from the upper Tigris. Secondly and more importantly, the inability of the Romans' to capture Hatra shows that despite their success at Ctesiphon, they did not necessarily control all possible territory in northern Mesopotamia. Adiabene, perhaps having been ravaged in 195 CE, apparently did not pose any threat to Roman forces proceeding along the Euphrates, but most likely remained unoccupied by the Romans.

Cass. Dio 75.3.2 appears to allude to the creation of new Roman provinces as a result of Roman campaigns. Indeed, the formation of two new Roman provinces of Osroene and Mesopotamia is attested epigraphically.²⁴² In the case of the province of Osroene, its formation is corroborated by an inscription of C. Julius Pacatianus—*proc(urator) provinc. O[sr]hoenae, praefectus*

239 Cary 1927, 217–219 (but with some changes concerning proper names).

240 Herodian's description (3.9.3) is widely considered as invaluable. He actually combined both Eastern campaigns of Severus (from 195 and 197–199 CE) into one and put its itinerary with only one sentence: "... after crossing Mesopotamia and the territory of Adiabene, Severus hurried on into Arabia Felix..." (Whittaker 1969, 317). The reference to Arabia Felix is certainly mistaken. See Murphy 1945, 2; Birley 1988, 117. Other minor sources, e.g. Eutr. 8.12, are equally brief and do not contribute any valuable information to the issue.

241 The chronology is definitely confused. For Severus' campaign against the Parthian capital at Ctesiphon, see Hasebroek 1921, 110–115; Platnauer 1918b, 114–12; Birley 1988, 129–135. The second siege of Hatra is hardly datable in absolute terms, see, e.g., Hasebroek 1921, 114 (199 CE); Platnauer 1918b, 118–121 (199/200 CE); Millar 1964, 143 (198 CE); Sartre 2005, 149 (who mentions only one siege in 198 CE); Hauser 2013a, 121 (197 and 199 CE); Isaac 2013, 24 (197/198 CE).

242 For the epigraphic and numismatic data on the new Roman provinces, see Magie 1950, 1543–1544 with references to older literature.

*legionis Parthicae, pr[o]c(urator) Alpium Co[t]tiarum, adlectus inter comit[es A]uggg. nnn.*²⁴³ In turn, a *provincia Mesopotamia* is briefly mentioned in the occasional epitaph;²⁴⁴ we also know of its procurator in the time of Severus, Sex. Cornelius Honoratus (*procurator sexagenarius prov. Mesopotamiae*),²⁴⁵ as well as its *praefectus* of Equestrian rank, likely to be identified with C. Julius Priscus.²⁴⁶

However, it has been disputed as to whether the creation of provinces of Osrhoene and Mesopotamia took place as a result of the 195 CE campaign,²⁴⁷ as suggested by Cass. Dio 75.3.2, or only after the 197–199 CE campaigns.²⁴⁸ As far as the province of Osrhoene is concerned, the discovery of the inscription found on a boundary stone and published in 1983 definitely solves the problem surrounding Osrhoene; the province was already attested in 195 CE (the third year of Severus' tribunician power).²⁴⁹ In turn, there is no direct evidence allowing for a precise dating of the establishment of the province of Mesopotamia, but it appears that the situation of stability suitable for the creation of a new province located very close to the Parthian border was achieved more effectively after Severus's second Eastern campaign than after the first campaign in 195 CE.²⁵⁰

The creation of a Roman province in Osrhoene raises the question of the fate of the kingdom of Osrhoene.²⁵¹ Remarkably, the sources reveal friendly relations between Emperor Septimius Severus and Abgar VIII and his son and successor Abgar IX—even the assumption of the emperor's family names, respectively, Septimius Abgarus VIII and Severus Abgarus IX, implies they both individually reigned in their kingdom (Cass. Dio 79.16.2).²⁵² This has been

243 CIL XII 1856 = ILS 1353.

244 CIL XIII 7323 = ILS 9148.

245 CIL VIII 9760 = ILS 1388.

246 CIL VI 1638 = ILS 1331, ILS 8847. Thus, it can be stated that in the case of both provinces the power was given to members of the Roman *equester ordo*.

247 von Domaszewski 1887, 297–299, esp. 299; Hasebroek 1921, 78; Fluss 1923, 1960; Schachermeyr 1931, 1158–1159.

248 Ritterling 1925, 1435; Magie 1950, 1543.

249 Wagner 1983, 113; Wagner 1985, 64. The date is accepted by Birley 1988, 117, 132 who thinks that the province of Osrhoene was created in AD 195 and primarily comprised the entire Roman territory in Mesopotamia. Thus, a separate province of Mesopotamia was created only later as a result of the Severus's second Eastern campaign.

250 Ritterling 1925, 1435; Magie 1950, 1543; Birley 1988, 132; Southern 2001, 42; Edwell 2008, 26–28.

251 See Ross 2001, 49–53, 56–68 and Sommer 2005, 239–243.

252 Ross 2001, 49–53, 56–60.

explained by the assumption that the royal family of Osrhoene was allowed by Severus to retain a part of their kingdom (especially Edessa, presumably, as the capital) until 212/213 CE.²⁵³

It was the province of Mesopotamia that became a new borderline of *Imperium Romanum* with *Imperium Parthicum* and its vassal states, especially Adiabene. Therefore, it is important to pose a question about its geographical extent, especially in its eastern and northeastern extension where it may have bordered Adiabene.²⁵⁴ Unfortunately, the eastern and northeastern extent of the province of Mesopotamia can be stated only approximately. Certainly, the fact that we know of several settlements that may have become Roman *colonia* helps us draw an approximate border in the region.

First, an important Roman *colonia* in Mesopotamia, attested through its coinage, is Carrhae (already minted under Marcus Aurelius and Septimius).²⁵⁵ This settlement is located only some 42 km southeast of modern Şanlıurfa (and so may belong to the province of Osrhoene); however, the Papyrus Euphratensis no. 16, dated to 250 CE, explicitly attributes Carrhae to the province of Mesopotamia.²⁵⁶ Another important settlement located east of Carrhae is Rhesaina, which is often assumed to have been founded as a Roman *colonia* in the province of Mesopotamia.²⁵⁷ The oldest coinage comes from the time of Emperor Caracalla (188–217 CE).²⁵⁸ Third, in writing of Pompey's conquest of Nisibis, Dio (36.6.2) made an editorial remark about Nisibis as a Roman *colonia* (ἀποικίος) in his own time (before 235 CE). The colonial status of Nisibis is also confirmed by numismatic evidence. The city had minted its coinage

253 Older solutions implied a sort of juggling with the throne of Osrhoene, e.g. according to Platnauer 1918b, 195, n. 3 and Hasebroek 1921, 75–76, Severus first created a province, but later gave the kingdom back to Abgar VIII. Likewise, Caracalla is again supposed to remove Abgar IX, but Gordian III to again restore the Abgar dynasty.

254 As for the western border, it reached as far as the Khabur River at least in 245 CE. This is confirmed by the find of a papyrus which contains the petition of a local villager to Julius Priscus who is called *Praefectus Mesopotamiae*. See Edwell 2008, 27–28.

255 Hill 1922, 82–83.

256 Millar 1990, 39.

257 Thus Millar 1990, 39; Pollard 2000, 290; Edwell 2008, 28; Comfort 2009, 307–308. However, the problem is twofold. First, Malalas 13.39 remarks that Rhesaina was a village (κώμη), before Theodosius II made it a city (and renamed as Theodosiopolis) in AD 380/381. It is always possible that Malalas exaggerates Theodosius II's achievements by undermining the previous state of the city (Pollard 2000, 290). Second, in referring to the same event, *Chron. Edessa* 35 explicitly attributes Rhesaina to Osrhoene. See Greatrex, Lieu 2002, 16. For the coinage from Rhesaina, see Castelin 1946.

258 Hill 1922, 125.

since the reign of Emperor Macrinus (217–218 CE),²⁵⁹ but its Latin name, *Septimia Nisibis*, points to its founding under Septimius Severus.²⁶⁰ Lastly, another important settlement that can be classified as a Roman colonia is Singara. Its earliest coinages were minted under Emperor Gordian III (238–244 CE),²⁶¹ but its name *Aurelia Septimia Colonia Singara* suggests its foundation under the reign of Marcus Aurelius (161–180 CE).²⁶² Singara is the easternmost major settlement in Mesopotamia which may be identified as a colonia in the Roman province of Mesopotamia.

Another important settlement southeast of Singara is Hatra, which was not conquered by the Romans and consequently could not have belonged to the province of Mesopotamia.²⁶³ Again, it has been suggested on the basis of numismatic evidence that Nineveh became a Roman colony.²⁶⁴ However, the inscriptions on the coins attributed once to Nineveh as a Roman colonia has been reread as *Ninica* and not *Niniva* and consequently reattributed to *Ninica Claudiopolis* in Cilicia.²⁶⁵ Therefore, there is no evidence for Nineveh as a Roman colonia.²⁶⁶

To conclude, the cases of Hatra and Nineveh show that the entire course of the middle Tigris River could not serve as a border.²⁶⁷ In the current state of research, Singara appears to be the easternmost settlement in the possession of the Romans under Septimius Severus in Mesopotamia. In this light, it appears that the Roman border must have followed the natural barriers of this part

259 Hill 1922, 119–120.

260 Magie 1950, 1544; Millar 1990, 38; Comfort 2009, 303–306. For an overview of the history of Nisibis, see Sturm 1936a, 714–757; Pigulevskaja 1963, 49–59 and G.M. Cohen 2013, 62–67 (under Antioch in Mygdonia).

261 Hill 1922, CX.

262 Magie 1950, 1544; Millar 1990, 39.

263 By contrast, Isaac 2013, 25 points to Hatra's provision of troops to Niger (Her. 3.1.3) and suggests that it suggests a vassal status for Hatra. However, it should be noted that providing troops to a foreign ruler does not have to be interpreted exclusively in this way. For instance, Vologases I is known to have offered a similar assistance (40,000 mounted archers) to Vitellius (Suet. *Vesp.* 6.4; see also Tac. *Hist.* 2.82).

264 Still Haider 2008, 202.

265 Ramsay 1894, 164–167; Hill 1922, CXX; Le Rider 1967, 14, n. 2; Reade 1998, 68–69.

266 Marciak 2014a, 210, n. 100.

267 It should also be mentioned that a number of fortifications located between Sinjar, Mosul, and Hatra, which were long considered to be Roman, have been recently reinterpreted as Parthian *castella* from the late 2nd and early 3rd century CE. See Hauser 1995, 117–118; Isaac 2013, 25, n. 8; Gregoratti 2013, 48–50; Hauser 2013a, 131.

of Mesopotamia—that is, to follow the Khabur-Sinjar line in the east and the Tigris River only in the north.

9.6 Adiabene, Hatra, and Osrhoene

The ruins of the Baal Shamin temple in Hatra revealed a number of statues of kings and nobles who were presented as worshippers of the deity.²⁶⁸

One of the statues (depicting a standing figure of a bearded man wearing a high upright tiara adorned with a diadem) was completed with an inscription (Hatra inscription no. 21[H21]) which identifies the worshipper as *'tlw mlk' ntw'nšry'* (see Figure 74).²⁶⁹ The term *'tlw* is a proper name of the worshipper who is also called the king (*mlk'*) and *ntw'nšry'*.²⁷⁰ The interpretation of the inscription in question has a long history (see chapter 8.3.2.). However, in the current state of research,²⁷¹ it can be stated that the name *'tlw* goes back to a well-known Greek name, Ἀτταλος, because Hatrene *t* corresponds to Greek ττ, and the final ζ was not noted.²⁷² In turn, the term *ntw'nšry'* is the ethnicon meaning “Adiabenean,” as the term is connected with the Parthian and Middle-Persian names of Adiabene attested in the trilingual inscription of Shapur I (on the walls of Ka'ba-ye Zardosht near Naqsh-e Rostam) as *ntwšrkn* and *nwthštrkn* (see chapter 8.3.2.).²⁷³ It follows that Attalos (*'tlw*) was the king of Adiabene.²⁷⁴

The inscription does not include any dates, but some information can be obtained from the archaeological context. First, the statue was placed in the Baal Shamin temple, which was erected in 138 CE (according to Hatra

268 For an exhaustive overview, see Dirven 2008.

269 Beyer 1998, 33.

270 See Caquot 1952, 101; Altheim, Stiehl 1967, 264; Milik 1962, 52; H.J.W. Drijvers 1977, 824; Lipiński 1982, 117–120; Beyer 1998, 33.

271 Lipiński 2015, 205 is followed here.

272 E. Lipiński, 205. Alternatively, the proper name *'tlw* has been vocalized as *Āṭal* by Altheim, Stiehl 1967, 264 and as *'Aṭilū* by Beyer 1998, 33.

273 Lipiński 2015, 204–205. Lipiński's explanation appears to give a definite answer to the doubts raised by Luther 2015, 284, n. 35.

274 What is more, the term *ntw* Lipiński's explanation appears to give a definite answer to the doubts raised by Luther (2015, 284, n. 35). *nšr* also appears in Hatra inscriptions nos. 113 and 114 where it denoted the grandfather or the ancestor of the donor who is called 'Alkūd (or 'Alkūr) son of 'Ustānaq. It appears that the noble attested in the inscription also came from Adiabene, and belonged to its upper classes (as he could afford a dedication), although a royal title is unattested.

inscription no. 272 [H272]) and abandoned after the Sasanian conquest in 240/241 CE (the latest extant inscription comes from 238 CE).²⁷⁵ What is more, the statue of Attalos features close stylistic similarities with the statue of the Hatrene king Sanatruq II, whose reign can be approximately dated to between 231 and 237/238 CE thanks to the inscriptions (nos. 36 and 229).²⁷⁶ Thus, the king of Adiabene Attalos (*tlw*) must have reigned approximately in the first half of the third century CE.

It is remarkable that the statue of a foreign king (as well as of members of the foreign elites—'Alkūd ('Alkūr) and 'Ustānaq, see chapter 8.4.2) was allowed in Hatra. This fact clearly shows that Hatra played the role of interregional sanctuary during the third century CE.²⁷⁷ Furthermore, the dedication of the king of the nearby kingdom of Adiabene also suggests close cultural ties and good political relations between the two kingdoms (at that time the rulers of Hatra already bore royal titles²⁷⁸).

Thus, we can assume that the relationship between Adiabene and Hatra, at least in the first half of the third century CE, was based on cooperation rather than on competition. Indeed, it is possible to show at least two common grounds for such cooperation in the context of the second and third centuries CE. First, in political terms, both Adiabene and Hatra faced the same enemy in the second century CE—the Roman Empire during the campaigns of Trajan (114–116 CE) and Septimius Severus (195 and ca. 198–199 CE). Although we do not possess explicit references to their common military and political cooperation in ancient sources, such cooperation is very likely and the lack of proof is connected rather to the state of extant sources (in which, for example, we hear of several anonymous Mesopotamian rulers opposing Trajan, but we cannot precisely identify them). At the same time, the geopolitical situation in the third century CE was very different from that of the preceding century; Hatra and Rome were allied against the Sasanians.²⁷⁹ Given the fact that Hatra and Adiabene were apparently conducting such close relations, we may also speculate that Adiabene primarily belonged to the group of countries that remained

275 H.J.W. Drijvers 1977, 821; Teixidor 1967–68, 2; Hauser 2013a, 121.

276 Beyer 1998, 38–39, 73; Sommer 2005, 372; Sartre 2005, 346.

277 Thus Schlumberger 1969, 128–130; H.J.W. Drijvers 1977, 824–825; Dijkstra 1995, 175–176; Gawlikowski 1994, 27; Gawlikowski 2013, 74. By contrast, see Kaizer 2013, 67–68.

278 Hauser 1994, 470–471; Dirven 2008, 220–223; Gregoratti 2013, 53. The award of the royal status took place between 151/152 and 177/178 CE.

279 See Hauser 2013a, 130–133.

loyal to the Arsacids over the Sasanians.²⁸⁰ Second, in economic terms, Hatra is most often considered to be located along a prominent communication route (also of commercial importance) between northern Mesopotamia and Babylonia (from Singara southwards).²⁸¹ Importantly, Adiabene could also be connected to (and profit from) this important route from two directions in particular: first via Ashur,²⁸² and second via the Tigris crossings located northwest of the Great Zab (Nineveh, Nimrud).²⁸³

Interestingly, strong connections between Adiabene and its other neighbor, Osrhoene, have also been suggested. First and foremost, it has been claimed by A. von Gutschmid that Osrhoene was “eine Dependenz des adiabenenischen Reiches” between 91–109 CE.²⁸⁴ This assumption is based on the similarities between the names of two rulers of Osrhoene—Abgar bar-Izaṭ and Ma’nu bar-Izaṭ (125/126–165/166 CE)²⁸⁵ and the famous king of Adiabene and convert to Judaism, Izates II.²⁸⁶ However, it should be noted that, firstly, the etymology of the name of the king of Adiabene, known only from the Greek and Latin transmission (Ἰζάττης in *Ant.* 20.17–96, but Ἰζά in *Bell.* 4.568, and *Iuliates*, *Ezates*, or

280 This would call into question the version of events presented in the *Chronicle of Arbela*, according to which Šāhrāt, king of Adiabene, sided with the Sasanians against the falling Arsacids. See Kettenhofen 1995b, 299–302. Generally speaking, if the Sasanian conquest of Adiabene is to be dated to between 223/224 and 226/227 AD (see Widengren 1971, 148–150; Alram, Gyselen 2003, 23–24; Olbrycht 2010a, 201–202), then the reign of Attalos occurred before the Sasanian conquest rather than afterwards. Furthermore, this may also give us the answer to the notorious question as to whether the Adiabene dynasty from Arsacid times continued under the Sasanians or whether the Sasanians appointed a new royal line in Adiabene, most likely a branch of the Sasanian royal family. In light of the data from Hatra, the latter option is more likely. The similarity of the names of the two kings of Adiabene (Ardashir) to the Sasanian royal names, the strong position of the king of Adiabene in *RGDS*, and finally, the evidence of family relations between Shapur II and Ardashir II, king of Adiabene, also point to the latter option—that the Sasanians appointed a new royal line in Adiabene, which was a branch of the Sasanian royal family itself. This conclusion is of course a matter of conjecture, but the evidence of close relations between Adiabene and Hatra in the first half of the second century CE is striking.

281 See Hauser 1995 and Altaweel, Hauser 2004. By contrast, see Kaizer 2013, 62–66.

282 Gregoratti 2013, 48.

283 See also Reade 1998, 81, fig. 2; Reade 1999, 286–288 (esp. 298, fig. 5); Marciak 2014a, 197, n. 179.

284 von Gutschmid 1887, 27–28.

285 Luther 1999, 188–190; Luther 2010.

286 Scholars who find this connection probable include Ross 2001, 35 and Sommer 2005, 238, n. 51. By contrast, Luther 2015, 285, n. 42 finds this assumption “nicht sicher zu beweisen.”

Exates in various manuscripts of Tacitus's *Ann.* 12.13²⁸⁷), is not certain at all (see chapter 8.4.2); secondly, the name most frequently suggested as the Iranian equivalent of the Josephan Izates (*yazata) is a very common Iranian name.²⁸⁸ In this light, the similarity between names, if valid at all, may be coincidental and as such it cannot sustain the weight of von Gutschmid's theory.

It can be said that in *most general terms* Osrhoene and Adiabene were neighbors.²⁸⁹ However, direct territorial contact could take place only if Adiabene conducted its furthest territorial expansion as far as Nisibis (see chapter 7.1–3).²⁹⁰ At least three cases of military and political cooperation are recorded in ancient sources. First, both Acbarus of Edessa and Izates II of Adiabene were among the Oriental rulers who were forced to join the Roman-Parthian expedition of Meherdates in 48–49 CE, which ran through their territories.²⁹¹ Second, during the time of Trajan, Abgar of Edessa (Abgar VII) and Mebarsapes of Adiabene appear to have belonged to one political camp, before the former had to change sides.²⁹² Third, we know that the rulers of both Osrhoene and Adiabene besieged the Roman garrison in Nisibis shortly before AD 195 (see chapter 9.5.).

To summarize, the history of Osrhoene and Adiabene indeed shows several well-documented cases of mutual political and military cooperation. This cooperation certainly was made possible due to geographical proximity, but was due even more to current political interests (mainly in the form of a mutual enemy). Importantly, no direct cultural ties between Adiabene and Osrhoene (such as those observed between Adiabene and Hatra), are evident during the Hellenistic and Parthian periods.

287 Marciak 2014a, 228, n. 15 and 248, n. 10.

288 Gignoux 1986, 189–191 (nos. 1045–1055); Gignoux, C. Jullien, F. Jullien 2009, 88–89 (no. 244).

289 Otherwise, one cannot overlook that fact that Osrhoene and Adiabene were not the only geopolitical or ethnic entities in northern Mesopotamia (see chapters 9.3 and 9.4). Such ignorance could lead to the false reconstruction of the itineraries of Roman troops and to unfounded conclusions on the geopolitical situation.

290 A general memory of Adiabene's extension as far as Nisibis (on the doorstep of Osrhoene) probably echoes in Theodoret's otherwise bizarre remark (*HR* 2.1.) about Adiabene "belonging to the Parthians, but now called Osrhoene." See Sellwood 1985; Segal 2005, 31; Marciak 2014a, 199, n. 191. In Theodoret's time (died ca. 466 CE), Osrhoene was a Roman province, while Adiabene was a Sasanian region.

291 Ziegler 1964, 65–66; Dąbrowa 1983, 121–124; Sommer 2005, 234; Hackl 2010a, 71; Marciak 2014a, 239, 247–249.

292 Ross 2001, 34; Sommer 2005, 235.

9.7 Caracalla

Another Roman campaign in the East was conducted in 214–216 CE by Emperor Marcus Aurelius Antoninus (known widely as Caracalla because of his hooded robe), perhaps (see Cass. Dio 78.7.1–4) only for the sake of his own military glory (*imitatio Alexandri*).²⁹³

This campaign is known mainly from Dio (78.12.1–2, 78.12.2–3, 78.18.1, 78.19.1, 78.21.1, 79.19.1–2; 79.1.1–2, 79.5.1), although some references to Caracalla's campaign can be found in other sources (esp. Her. 4.8–13 and SHA *Car.* 6.1–7.2).²⁹⁴

In preparation for the military invasion, Caracalla removed the kings of Armenia (anonymous) and Edessa (Abgar IX) from their thrones, and incorporated the latter to the Roman province of Osroene (Cass. Dio 77.12.1–2).²⁹⁵ At that time the Parthian throne was contested between Vologases VI, who ruled in Babylonia, and Artabanos IV, who reigned in Media and northern Mesopotamia (Cass. Dio 78.12.2–3).²⁹⁶ To open the hostilities, Caracalla looked for a pretext and it was Artabanos IV who gave Caracalla a *casus belli* by rejecting Caracalla's offer to marry Artabanos IV's daughter (Cass. Dio 78.19.1, 78.21.1, 79.1.1).²⁹⁷ As a result, Caracalla's campaign was conducted directly against Artabanos IV in Media Atropatene (as indicated by Dio) and not against Babylonia (as suggested by Herodian, 4.11.1–9, and explicitly stated by SHA *Car.* 6.4).²⁹⁸

In light of Dio's narrative, the expedition was largely confined to northern Mesopotamia (79.1.1–2). Dio speaks only about the Romans ravaging a large section of the country around Media including the capture of many fortresses. Dio mentions only one captured place explicitly by name, Arbela,²⁹⁹ where the Romans were said to open the royal tombs of the Parthians and scatter

293 Kettenhofen 1990, 790.

294 See Halfmann 1986, 224–225; Kettenhofen 1990, 790; Kienast 1996, 162–163; Hackl 2010a, 75, n. 233.

295 For Armenia, see Chaumont 1976, 154–155; for Edessa and Osroene, see Ross 2001, 57–60 and Sommer 2005, 241–242.

296 Olbrycht 2010a, 201.

297 For Caracalla's marital plans, see Timpe 1967.

298 Kettenhofen 1990, 791.

299 According to Herzfeld 1907, 115–116, on the basis of the find of a hoard of 15 Roman coins (minted from Antoninus Pius to Caracalla), one can suggest that Caracalla also conquered and destroyed Ashur. Herzfeld has been followed by Reusch 1931, 48 and n. 3; Debevoise 1938, 265, n. 123; and Schippmann 1980, 72. However, there is no archaeological evidence of any kind to support Herzfeld's assumption. Likewise Kettenhofen 1990, 791.

the bones.³⁰⁰ Therefore, there can be no doubt that the country in question was Adiabene, especially as Dio describes the Parthians as being inactive beyond the mountains (that is, the Zagros) and gathering their reinforcements there. The campaign can be dated to 216 CE.³⁰¹

Ancient accounts other than Dio do not appear to be of any value. Herodian delivers a lengthy account (Her. 4.11.1–9) about the arranged wedding between Artabanos IV's daughter and Caracalla's that took place in the heart of the Parthian territory (after the crossing of the rivers by the Roman legions). The Romans are said to have treacherously murdered the drunk Parthians during the ceremony, after which the Romans ravaged most of the Parthian Empire and later withdrew to Mesopotamia. Herodian's narrative is full of Roman clichés (Parthian luxury and inclines to excessive drinking, their inability to fight without horses and bows, their inability to run away on foot because of their long loose robes) and as such is rejected as fictitious.³⁰²

A very short reference to Caracalla's Parthian war can also be found in SHA *Car.* 6.4 in which the Parthian war is presented as the engagement with (only) "many Parthian satraps." However, the itinerary of this engagement is presented with only one phrase (*per Cadusios et Babylonios ingressus*) and does not make any sense in geographical terms, as the country of Cadussi (southwestern shore of the Caspian Sea) and Babylonia lay far apart.³⁰³ The geographical

300 Perhaps this was undertaken in order to imitate Alexander the Great's deed in Babylon; see Kettenhofen 1990, 791.

301 Caracalla's presence in Antioch on May 27, 216 is attested on an inscription on the Dmejr Temple near Antioch. The *Cognitio Imperatoris Caracallae de Gohariensis* (SEG 17, 1960, no. 759) records a dispute over the control of the cult, which was brought before Caracalla in Antioch. Likewise Kettenhofen 1990, 791.

302 Magie 1950, 1554; Kolb 1972, 112; Kettenhofen 1990, 790: "a highly fictionalized account."

303 Magie 1950, 1554; Kolb 1972, 115; Kettenhofen 1990, 791. Three different emendations of this phrase have been suggested (see Timpe 1967, 477–478). First, it could be emended as διὰ Καρδουαίας καὶ Ἀρβήλων, which would indicate a reasonable itinerary from Nisibis via Gordyene to Arbelitis (von Gutschmidt 1888, 155). Second, according to Drexler 1880, 53–53, perhaps the Cadussi could be understood as a branch of Cadussi who are attested in the Zagros Mountains (*Geog.* 11.6.1), and Adiabene should be understood as part of a larger area of Babylonia (like in *Geog.* 16.1.19). Third, it has been suggested that Cadussi could be identified with Καδασηνοί (Καδισηνοί), who are known from the sixth century CE on as living in Mesopotamia around the Sinjar Mountains (thus Nöldeke 1879b, 157–159 and Dillemann 1962, 97). The only possible emendation is that of von Gutschmidt, as Dio does not describe Caracalla as fighting in the Zagros Mountains, which would in turn have been a highly risky enterprise. The problem of the Cadussi, just as with the Mardians, is that they are mentioned in more than one place in the Ancient Near East; see Syme 1988.

aspect of contribution of SHA *Car.* 6.4 to the history of Caracalla's Parthian war can be wholly dismissed.³⁰⁴

To summarize, Caracalla's campaign against the Parthians was limited to the territory of Adiabene on the east bank of the Tigris. In military terms, it can indeed be seen as "demonstration of Roman strength rather than a serious attempt at annexation."³⁰⁵ Accordingly, Caracalla's achievement found a rather modest reflection on coins issued in 217 CE where a Parthian victory, *Vic(toria) Part(hica)*, was (still exaggeratedly) proclaimed.³⁰⁶ After the campaign in Adiabene, Caracalla spent the winter in Edessa (216/217 CE). Whatever his future plans may have been, Caracalla's activity was ended by his murder in a plot on 8 April 217 CE (Cass. Dio 79.5.1).³⁰⁷ The Parthians apparently took this development as a chance and went on the offensive. The Parthians won a three-day battle at Nisibis in 217 CE, and the ensuing peace treaty ended with a huge contribution levied on the Romans in 218 CE, but no territorial cession took place; that is, Roman Mesopotamia remained intact (Cass. Dio 79.26–27; Her. 4.14–15; SHA *Macr.* 8).³⁰⁸

9.8 Cognomen *Adiabenicus* in the 3rd–4th Centuries CE

Several Roman emperors in the third and fourth centuries CE appear to have adopted the *cognomen ex virtute* (*cognomen victoriae*) ADIABENICUS MAXIMUS (see also chapter 9.5): Aurelian in 272 CE, the four Tetrarchs in 298 CE, Constantine I before 315 CE, and Constantius II in 343 CE.

The problem is, however, that it is difficult in all these cases to relate this data, coming from epigraphic and numismatic source, to literary texts and consequently to gain a historical perspective behind these acclamations.

First, the only ancient source that names Emperor Aurelian (270–275 CE) ADIABENICUS MAX. is SHA *Aur.* 30.5.³⁰⁹ Indeed, Emperor Aurelian led several military campaigns. Some of them led to the adoption of *cognomina victoriae*: against Vandals, Juthungi, Sarmatians in 271 CE (GERMANICUS MAX.); against Goths and in Dacia in 272 CE (GOTICUS MAX., DACICUS

304 Magie 1950, 1554; Kettenhofen 1990, 791.

305 Campbell 2005, 19.

306 Mattingly, Sydenham 1936, 257.

307 Kettenhofen 1990, 792; Campbell 2005, 20.

308 Kettenhofen 1990, 792; Campbell 2005, 20.

309 Kienast 1996, 234–235.

MAX.); against Palmyra in 272 CE (PARTHICUS MAX., ARABICUS MAX., PALMYRENICUS MAX.); and against Carpi in 273 CE (CARPICUS MAX.).³¹⁰

However, nothing is known from literary sources about Aurelian's campaigns in northern Mesopotamia. Aurelian indeed campaigned in Mesopotamia, but only against Palmyra in southern Mesopotamia.³¹¹ This campaign was celebrated with the adoption of cognomina PALMYRENICUS MAX., ARABICUS MAX., and PARTHICUS MAX. in 272 CE.³¹² It would have been pure and improbable speculation that the Adiabeni were involved in Palmyra's struggle in any way.³¹³ Several explanations are possible—the source had a very vague idea about Mesopotamian geography, or ADIABENICUS was mistakenly derived from ARABICUS, since both titles may be paleographically confused with each other,³¹⁴ or, most likely, the author of *Historia Augusta* borrowed the title from one of the earlier *vitae*.³¹⁵

The things look slightly different in the case of the four Tetrarchs. The adoption of the title ADIABENICUS MAX. may be connected with the Roman military campaigns under command of Galerius in the East that started in 296 and lasted until 298 CE.³¹⁶

This time, it was the Persian side, under the new ruler Narseh (accession in 293 CE), which opened the hostilities with the objective of regaining full control of Armenia (Amm. 23.5.11).³¹⁷ We can tentatively distinguish three distinctive phases of the war.³¹⁸ First, in 296 CE the Persians defeated the Romans at the battle between Carrhae and Callinicum, Roman troops lost ground in battle but managed to withdraw to Antioch (Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 39.34; Eutrop. 9.24; Oros. 7.25.9; Theoph. *Chron.* AM 5793).³¹⁹ Second, the situation was reversed

310 Kienast 1996, 234–235.

311 For the historical context, see U. Hartmann 2001, 364–424.

312 Kienast 1996, 234–235.

313 A similar idea has been put forward with Aurelian's title ARMENIACUS—this may have been assumed by Aurelian due to the participation of Armenian auxiliaries in the rebellion in Palmyra (thus, Chaumont 1969, 90 and Felix 1985, 94). This idea has been rejected by Kerler 1970, 233 and Kettenhofen 1986, 140–141.

314 Shāhid 1984, 59.

315 Kerler 1970, 233 and Kettenhofen 1986, 141.

316 For a full overview of sources, see Dodgeon, Lieu 1991, 124–131. For the historical context, see Ensslin 1942, 35–54; Eadie 1967, 146–149; Barnes 1976, 182–186; Bleckmann 1992, 130–155.

317 Ensslin 1942, 35–36; Seston 1946, 168; Winter 1988, 155; Bleckmann 1992, 138; Mosig-Walburg 2009, 120–122.

318 Eadie 1967, 146–149; Barnes 1976, 182–186.

319 Eadie 1967, 147; Barnes 1976, 182; Winter 1988, 156–157.

when the Persians lost the battle near modern Satala in the upper Euphrates valley in 297 or 298 CE.³²⁰ The defeat was overwhelming—the Persian army suffered great losses, Narseh managed to escape, but the members of his family (wives, sisters, children) were captured by the Romans (Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 39.35; Eutr. 9.25.1; Fest. 14.5, 25.2–3; Oros. 7.25.10–11; Malalas 12.45–47; BP 3.21).³²¹ Third, the Romans acquired very advantageous peace conditions.³²² It was perhaps even more the loss of his family than a military defeat that led Narseh to sue for peace and accept Roman authoritative conditions of peace in 298 CE (Petros Patrikios, FGrHist IV, Fr. 14).³²³

Although it has been claimed that after the battle at Satala “Galerius advanced into Media and Adiabene, took Nisibis and proceeded finally to the stronghold of Ctesiphon which he captured,”³²⁴ the ancient sources do not provide us with precise details concerning military developments after the battle at Satala. Only the following brief and enigmatic pieces of information can be gleaned from ancient sources:³²⁵

- The epigraphic evidence includes the cognomina ARMENIACUS MAX., MEDICUS MAX., ADIABENICUS MAX., and PERSICUS MAX., which are attested in the *Currency Edict* and the *Price Edict* for 301 CE,³²⁶ and in the *Edict concerning the Accusations* (which is known from possibly as many as seven epigraphic copies, the oldest of which can be dated to 305 CE).³²⁷

320 Two different dates—297 and 298—are frequently given for the second phase of the war. The *Consularia Constantinopolitana* 330 and the *Chronicon Paschale* date the Persian defeat to 297 CE (see Burgess 1993, 234 and Mi. Whitby, Ma. Whitby 1989, 3, n. 9), while Joshua the Stylite (see W. Wright 1882, 6) dates the Roman capture of Nisibis to between October 297 and October 298 CE (year 609 of the Seleucid era). For the dating, see von Stauffenberg 1931, 399 (297 CE); Ensslin 1942, 39–40 (298 CE); Seston 1946, 168 (297 CE); Barnes 1976, 184–185 (298 CE); Winter 1988, 158 (298 CE); Schippmann 1990, 30 (297 CE).

321 Ensslin 1942, 38; Eadie 1967, 148; Barnes 1976, 183–184.

322 Eadie 1967, 148–149; Barnes 1976, 182.

323 Dignas, Winter 2007, 84–86.

324 Bowman 2005, 81. Although, for the sake of geographical order, one should have first proceeded to Nisibis and only then to Adiabene and Media, or first to Media, then to Adiabene, and only finally to Nisibis.

325 See Ensslin 1942, 40–45.

326 Barnes 1982, 17–19.

327 CIL III 578 (ILS 642). See Feissel 1995, 45–46; AE 1995, 1386; Corcoran 2002, 221–230, esp. 224–227.

- Both Theophanes (*Chron.* AM 5793) and Zonaras (12.31) write that Galerius pursued Narseh “as far as the interior of Persia”: μέρχι τῆς ἐνδοτέρας Περσίδος.³²⁸
- According to Eutropius 9.25.1, Narseh was forced to take refuge in the remotest deserts in his dominion (“ipsum in ultimas regni solitudines egit”).³²⁹
- In speaking about Narseh’s escape, Malalas 12.39 claims that he fled to εἰς τὸ Ἰνδολίμιτον,³³⁰ which is usually understood as the frontier of India.³³¹
- The anonymous place where the peace negotiations between Narseh and the Roman envoy Sicorius took place (Petros Patrikios, FGrHist IV, Fr. 14) is said to lie near the Asproudis, a river in Media.³³²
- *SHA Car.* 9.1 writes that Galerius’s achievement proved the popular opinion that, by the decree of the Fate, the Romans should not advance beyond Ctesiphon (precisely, “conquer the Persians and advance beyond them” [“Persas vincere atque ultra eos progredi”])³³³ to be wrong. It follows that according to *SHA Carus* 9.1, Galerius advanced beyond Ctesiphon.³³⁴
- Ammianus 24.1.10, in writing about Julian’s advance along the Euphrates, mentions an old Roman soldier from the city of Anatha (some 100 km downstream of Dura-Europos³³⁵), said to be nearly 100 years old, who while serving under Galerius as a very young man was left behind by the Roman legions due to his illness and spent most of his life in Sasanian Mesopotamia.
- In his speech (*Oratio ad sanctorum coetum* 16.2), Constantine I claims to have seen the ruins of Babylon (and Memphis in Egypt).³³⁶ Provided that we do not have to do here with literary fiction, Constantine I may indeed have seen the city as a tribune in the Roman legions accompanying Galerius.³³⁷
- According to some sources, during Galerius’s campaign in Greater Armenia Diocletian remained in Mesopotamia (Eutrop. 9.25.1: Mesopotamia; Oros. 7.25.9–11: Mesopotamia; Lact. *De mortibus persecutorum* 9.6: “eastern provinces”; Malalas: “in Antioch”) with some troops (Eutrop. 9.25.1), but was

328 Dindorf 1870, 161 (Zonaras); de Boor 1883, 9 (Theophanes).

329 F.L. Müller 1995, 136.

330 H. Thurn 2000, 237.

331 Ensslin 1942, 41–42, n. 5; Dodgeon, Lieu 1991, 130: “limes of India”, J. Thurn 2009: 322: “zum indischen Limes.”

332 For various (unsuccessful) attempts of identification, see Ensslin 1942, 42. For our current purposes, it suffices to observe that, according to Petros Patrikios (FGrHist IV, Fr. 14), Narseh was in Media at the time of negotiations.

333 Magie 1932, 430.

334 Bleckmann 1992, 142, n. 317.

335 Kettenhofen 1982a, 50–51; den Boeft, Drijvers, den Hengst, Teitler 2002, 14; Edwell 2008, 72.

336 Girardet 2013, 188.

337 Barnes 1976, 184; Girardet 2013, 188–189, n. 142 (with further reading suggestions).

largely inactive (Lact. *De mortibus persecutorum* 9.6). In turn, Galerius is reported to have joined Diocletian in Mesopotamia after the battle near Satala (Eutrop. 9.25.1; Oros. 7.25.9–11; Malalas 12.39: “in Antioch”).

- According to Joshua the Stylite, Nisibis was captured by the Romans in the year 609 of the Seleucid era (that is, between October 297 and October 298).³³⁸
- Agat’angelos speaks of the Armenian king Trdat (Tiridates IV) successfully fighting on the side of the Romans in Assyria, the land of the Arabs, and Media. Likewise, Moses Khorenats’i (MX 2.87) also mentions Roman military activities in Assyria and in Media (including the capture of Ecbatana).³³⁹

It is evident that the available sources provide enough indication to identify two distinctive areas of Roman military activity—one in Greater Armenia and Media and another in Mesopotamia and Babylonia. At the same time, the two premises for the Roman capture of Ctesiphon are not strong; a Roman soldier could have been left in the territory of the Sasanians during Galerius’s 296 CE campaign, and Constantine I’s claim may be a literary convention (or only refer to Memphis).³⁴⁰ However, some scholars accept both campaigns as historical fact.³⁴¹ It should however be noted that it is hardly acceptable to view both campaigns as having been conducted by both Galerius (in Greater Armenia and Media) and Diocletian (capturing Ctesiphon) independently, for two reasons: first, some sources connect Galerius with the southern route; second, several sources see Diocletian as largely inactive during the fighting; and third, all sources attribute the military glory only to Galerius.³⁴² Furthermore, if Galerius fought the main battle near Satala, the most straightforward path to Media was via modern Ağrı and Doğubayazıt (that is, without turning southwards

338 See W. Wright 1882, 6. However, in contrast to Ensslin 1942, 43, it should be noted that Joshua the Stylite does not explicitly state that it was Diocletian who captured the city.

339 Additionally, attention has also been given to Galerius’s triumphal arch (see Winter 1988, 161). However, its presentations appear to be strictly propagandistic, as they present Galerius as a second Alexander the Great (Bleckmann 1992, 142). For the arch, see Laubscher 1975 and H. Meyer 1980.

340 See Heikel 1902, XCIV; Hanson 1973, 505–506; Bleckmann 1992, 141–142, n. 317. But the syntax of the text in question is controversial and may be understood in a way that suggests that Constantine I mentions both Babylon and Memphis (as Biblical cities), but afterwards claims his autopsy only with Memphis.

341 Barnes 1976, 184; Winter 1988, 161; Bowman 2005, 81.

342 Contra Ensslin 1942, 40 who sees Diocletian’s presence in Mesopotamia as “Parallelvormarsch zur Flankendeckung.” Likewise Winter 1988, 158–159.

across the Tauros to the Upper Tigris Valley).³⁴³ In purely theoretical terms, Galerius may have reached Media from Satala (as above), and next turned to Adiabene (via the Keli-Shin Pass) and proceeded (like Alexander the Great) along the famous royal road via Arbela to Babylonia (and have returned along the Euphrates), but this would have been an extremely long march—even without additionally meeting Diocletian in Nisibis).³⁴⁴ To conclude, it appears that, in general, a more limited itinerary of Roman troops should be postulated (from Satala to Nisibis, or, at most, from Satala to Nisibis via western Media and Adiabene), and more specifically, without the capture of Ctesiphon.³⁴⁵

As far as Adiabene is concerned, in light of the epigraphic data, we can conclude that Adiabene was likely militarily affected by the Roman campaign. Nonetheless, it should be stressed the available evidence has clear limitations; drawing a specific itinerary of Roman troops, not to mention the character and course of the fighting after the Battle near Satala, remains a matter of speculation to a great extent.

The title ADIABENICUS MAX. was also attributed to *Emperor Constantine I*. It is attested in several inscriptions, dated to 315 CE (10th tribunician year), which actually sets the *quo ante* date of the assumption of this victory title.³⁴⁶

It is, however, remarkable that Constantine I is not known to have conducted any military operations in the East. Rome's relations with Persia were friendly throughout most of Constantine I's reign.³⁴⁷ In 324/325 CE a Persian embassy is reported to have visited the Roman royal court in Constantinople and the Nisibis peace treaty from 298 CE was reinforced.³⁴⁸ It is only towards the end of Constantine I's reign when Persian involvement in Armenia (a failed attempt by Shapur II at installing a Persian *secundogeniture* in Armenia in 334 CE) brought about a change in mutual relations and actually led Constantine I to prepare a major Eastern campaign which, however, did not see its fulfillment (under Constantine I) due to his death on 22 May 337 CE.³⁴⁹

343 Contra Barnes 1976, 184 who thinks that Galerius "marched through Armenia, and through the territory lying immediately north of the Tigris" and next advanced to Ctesiphon.

344 See the route in Kettenhofen 1984a.

345 See Ensslin 1942, 44–45; Chaumont 1969, 199–200; Winter 1988, 161; Bleckmann 1992, 141–142, n. 317.

346 CIL III 578 (ILS 645, ILS 8942). See also Kienast 1996, 302.

347 For an exhaustive discussion of Constantine I's policy towards the Persians, see Barceló 1981, 73–82 and Mosig-Walburg 2009, 193–212.

348 See Barceló 1981, 74–75; Fowden 1994, 147–150.

349 See Barceló 1981, 78–81; Fowden 1994, 148–153; Dignas, Winter 2007, 88–89. By contrast, see Mosig-Walburg 2009, 203–210.

In this light, it can be safely stated that Constantine I, being a Caesar of Galerius (Roman tetrarchy—two Augustus and their two Caesars), received this *cognomen* from Galerius' victory titles, who actually campaigned against the Persians in 296–298 CE.³⁵⁰

Constantine I's death and the cancellation of preparations for the Eastern campaign in Rome led Shapur II to seize the initiative during the reign of *Constantius II* in the East. The hostilities lasted several decades and can tentatively be divided into two distinctive phases: from 337 to 359 CE, and from 359 to 361 CE.³⁵¹ In the first phase, the Persians led annual incursions into Mesopotamia and each time withdrew after the campaigning season, i.e., the Persians besieged Nisibis unsuccessfully three times (337 (or 338), 346 (or 348), and 350 CE).³⁵² One major battle near Singara in 344 CE ("Nachtschlacht") was probably (conflicting reports) won by the Persians.³⁵³ Due to the lack of more troops (which were engaged in western province of the Empire at that time), the Romans resorted to the defensive tactics.³⁵⁴ In 359–361 CE the Persians amassed more troops (previously engaged on other fronts) and managed to seize Amida and Bezabde, which in turn led to the Roman major counteroffensive under Julian in 363 CE.³⁵⁵

When does Adiabene come into play as the scene of Roman military activity? The cognomen ADIABENICUS MAX. is attested in an inscription from Pannonia, dated to 353 AD,³⁵⁶ which sets the *quo ante* date of the assumption of this victory title. The assumption itself should probably be dated to 343 CE.³⁵⁷ Namely, two other ancient texts mention Constantius II's *Assyrian* victory: Theophanes (*Chron.* AM 5834) for the year 342/342 CE³⁵⁸ and Kedrenos (1.522.9) for the sixth year of Constantius II's reign (that is 342/343 AD).³⁵⁹

350 Chaumont 1969, 128–129; Winter 1988, 201, n. 1.

351 See Barceló 1981, 82–98. See also Dignas, Winter 2007, 89, who (on the basis of Fest. 27) formulate three important general characteristics of the fighting: a large number of battles, the indecisive outcome of the battles, and the important role of fortified Mesopotamian towns and fortresses as a strong bulwark against the Sasanians. See also Mosig-Walburg 2009, 213–235.

352 For the sieges of Nisibis, see Lightfoot 1988, 105–125 and Burgess 1999, 7–17.

353 See Mosig-Walburg 1999.

354 Hunt 2005, 13.

355 Matthews 1989, 48–66.

356 CIL III 3705 (ILS 732): *Adiab<e>n(icus) max(imus)* corrected from *Adiabin(icus)*.

357 Kienast 1996, 316; Mosig-Walburg 2009, 279–280.

358 De Boor 1883, 37.

359 Bekker 1839, 522.9. What is more, the council at Serdica (342 or 343 AD) mentions the *Persian* victory (Athanasius, *Hist. Ar. ad. Mon.* 16.2). See Portmann 2006, 208. However, it

In this light, Roman military activity in Adiabene can be well understood against a backdrop of the first stage of the war. The Romans made counterattacks in autumn that in fact were scorched earth campaigns that only affected Sasanian borderlands. In this light, the title of ADIABENICUS MAX. adopted by Constantius II appears to be the result of one such violent but short campaign.³⁶⁰

Indeed, it has been suggested that an enigmatic account of Libanios, Or. 69.83–87 (his oration was probably held in the winter 344/345 CE in Nikomedeia³⁶¹) may refer to the incursion in Adiabene.³⁶² The text speaks about the Romans capturing “a not unimportant city” among the Persians (πόλεως οὐ φαυλοτάτης).³⁶³ It has been rightly pointed out that there were only several major non-Roman cities across the Tigris (Nineveh, Arbela, and Karkā de Beth Selōk) within easy reach of the Romans (stationed in the province of Mesopotamia).³⁶⁴

It has also been suggested the Romans’ expedition into Adiabene may have been connected with religious issues.³⁶⁵ Namely, the reign of Shapur II was marked by the change of Sasanian policy towards religious minorities—Christians especially started to be perceived as “a fifth column” in the Persian kingdom.³⁶⁶ Accordingly, the forced deportation of the conquered communities during the war (see Libanios, Or. 69.83–87), practiced by both

is not clear if the Persian victory should be equated with the Assyrians in this context. So Mosig-Walburg 2009, 279.

360 Likewise Hunt 2005, 13.

361 Mosig-Walburg 2009, 280.

362 Klein 1977, 235–237; Barceló 1981, 86–87; Dodgeon, Lieu 1991, 179–180; Blockley 1992, 15; Bellen 2003, 63; Mosig-Walburg 2009, 279–280.

363 Foerster 1908, 249. What is more, Libanios speaks of the resettlement of the Eretrians who, according to the Greek tradition were deported by the Achaemenid king Dareios I. Yet his reference should not be understood directly in the light of Herodotus (Herod. *Hist.* 6.101,109), who locates their settlement near Susa (Dodgeon, Lieu 1991, 386, n. 19), but more contemporary tradition, that is Strabo, who locates the settlement of the Eretrians in Gordyene. This location also strengthens the identification of the city captured by the Romans as Nineveh (Dodgeon, Lieu 1991, 385, n. 18), which was located closer to Gordyene than Arbela.

364 The location being based in the *Transtigritanae regiones* is unlikely (see Lieu, Montserrat 1996, 183 and 208, n. 29), as they mostly belonged under Roman control. Likewise Mosig-Walburg 2009, 279–281.

365 Klein 1977, 235–237; Barceló 1981, 86–87; Blockley 1992, 15; Bellen 2003, 63–64.

366 For the difficult situation being faced by Christians in the early Sasanian kingdom (especially under Shapur II), see Brock 1982, 1–19; Walker 2006, 109–112.

sides,³⁶⁷ may be interpreted as the repatriation of Christian-Persian persecuted communities. However, one should not overestimate the religious aspect of Constantius II's campaigns. Libanios (*Or.* 69.83–87) clearly speaks of a campaign of plunder, and there are no explicit indications of Constantius II's religious motivations in Libanios's narrative.³⁶⁸ Furthermore, as attested in Syriac sources, the majority of Christians did not leave the Sasanian kingdom.

9.9 The Byzantine Campaigns in Adiabene in the 6–7th Centuries CE

Lastly, the territory of Adiabene may have been invaded on at least three occasions in the late Sasanian period.³⁶⁹

First, in 541 CE a joint Arab-Roman army undertook what became later known as the Assyrian campaign, which was just one brief episode in the larger Roman-Sasanian war in 540–545 CE.³⁷⁰ The war actually began as the conflict between two Arab tribal confederations, Ghassānid and Lakhmid, which were allied with Rome and the Sasanians, respectively.³⁷¹ Our sole source for this campaign is Prokopios (*Pers.* 2.19.15–18),³⁷² who tells us that a joint Roman-Arab army (only 1200 Roman soldiers with a contingent of Arab riders) under the leadership of the Ghassānid Arab ruler Arethas was sent from the Roman camp at Sisauranon to Assyria,³⁷³ and its objective was to pillage and obtain basic intelligence about the enemy.³⁷⁴

The itinerary is very briefly described. The army crossed the Tigris and entered the land of the Assyrians (*Pers.* 2.19.18). Prokopios' data is vague in its geography—Assyria beyond the Tigris must refer to the eastern bank of the Tigris, but it is unclear as to how far south the raid extended.³⁷⁵ The area in

367 On the Parthian and Sasanian practice of massive deportations in general, see Kettenhofen 1994b.

368 Mosig-Walburg 2009, 279–281. An interesting observation is made by Walker 2006, 145 on the occasion of a plunder raid of a joint Arab-Roman army in Assyria in 541 CE: "... apparently, it made little difference to the Romans that many villages in this land were Christian ... the nature of Roman-Persian warfare allowed the land to be looted and pillaged."

369 A good overview is offered by Walker 2006, 144–147.

370 For the historical context of the Roman-Sasanian war in 540–545 CE, see Shahîd 1995, 209–236 (esp. 226–230). See also Walker 2006, 144–145.

371 Shahîd 1995, 209; Walker 2006, 144.

372 Shahîd 1995, 226; Walker 2006, 144.

373 Most likely modern Sirvan (some 40 km east of Nisibis), see Comfort 2009, 326.

374 Shahîd 1995, 227–228.

375 Walker 2006, 145.

which the Romans operated leads to the impression of a densely populated countryside undefended and suitable for plunder (*Pers.* 2.19.18).³⁷⁶ Given the fact that no strongholds are mentioned in the account, it seems mostly likely that the army did not cross the Great Zab, perhaps not even reaching the vicinity of Nineveh.³⁷⁷

The next campaign to affect Adiabene took place 50 years later in the summer of 591 CE. The political objective of a joint Roman-Persian army was to regain the Persian throne for Khusrō II, who fled from Persia because of the revolt led by Bahram Chobin.³⁷⁸ At the beginning of the summer of 591 CE, the Roman-Persian army advanced against Bahram Chobin through northern Mesopotamia. The main points of its itinerary are clear (*Theoph. Sim.* 5.4.3–5.4.4; 5.5.1–5.6.1): from Dara via Amouda to the Tigris crossing, from Dinabadon (the first stop east of the Tigris, the identification is doubtful³⁷⁹) to the Great Zab crossing.³⁸⁰ After the Great Zab crossing (*Theoph. Sim.* 5.6.1), the itinerary becomes less clear, as Theophylact Simocatta provides a slightly confused account of the progress of the Roman-Persian army through the territory between the Zabs (*Theoph. Sim.* 5.7.10–5.8.5).³⁸¹ However, the basic points of its itinerary are as follows.³⁸² The army crossed the Great Zab, and in four days reached a city called Alexandriana (which is described as the booty of Alexander the Great (*Theoph. Sim.* 5.7.11), and could perhaps be equated to Arbela³⁸³), which they captured. They next marched as far as the Little Zab,³⁸⁴ at which point they decided to dramatically change the direction of their march³⁸⁵ and

376 Walker 2006, 145.

377 According to Prokopios, *Anecdota* 2.23, Arethas did not achieve anything worthy of mention.

378 For the political context and the itinerary of the Roman-Persian war, see Whitby 1988, 297–208; Howard-Johnston 1999b, 169–173. For toponyms, see Hoffmann 1880, 216–222.

379 Contrast Whitby 1988, 302, n. 38 with Hoffmann 1880, 218–219.

380 Whitby 1988, 300, 302.

381 Whitby 1988, 30; Walker 2006, 145.

382 See Whitby 1988, 302–303.

383 Mi. Whitby, Ma. Whitby 1997, 142, n. 31; Walker 2006, 145. See also chapter 8.4.1.

384 The region between Alexandriana (Arbela) and the Little Zab is called Χναιθᾶς, and according to Theophylact, it was reached by the Romans in two days march from Alexandriana. The toponym Ḥnāithā, known from Syriac and Arabic sources (located on the east bank of the Great Zab) has been suggested as a parallel. See Hoffmann 1880, 216–217, 219.

385 This maneuver has been judged by Howard-Johnston 1999b, 172 as “a faint on the grandest scale, intended to detain Vahram in Mesopotamia until the point at which the Roman army could strike north-east and reach Atrpatakan before him.”

went backwards towards the Keli-Shin pass in the Zagros,³⁸⁶ with the aim of joining the Roman contingent in Armenia (Theoph. Sim. 5.8.5–5.9.3).³⁸⁷ The final battle was won by the Roman-Persian army in Armenia near Lake Urmia (Theoph. Sim. 5.10.1–12). This allowed Khusro II to regain the Persian crown. As a result of their support, the Romans received large territorial concessions, which actually marked the highest geographical extent of the Roman Empire in the East: in Mesopotamia, they regained Arzanene.³⁸⁸

As far as Adiabene is concerned, the country was raided (but Theophylact does not mention any plundering on the route between the Tigris and the Little Zab), and its capital Arbela captured. But altogether, Adiabene was neither occupied for a long period of time nor incorporated into the Roman Empire.

The last ancient Roman campaign that affected Adiabene took place in 627 CE, and was the last campaign conducted by Emperor Heraclius against the Sasanians in the war fought from 622 CE to 630 CE.³⁸⁹ This time, the Romans took on a completely different itinerary: from Armenia and Atropatene along the western shore of Lake Urmia across the Zagros Mountains into northern Mesopotamia (Theoph. *Chron.* AM 6118). On October 9, Heraclius passed the Zagros via the Keli-Shin pass and reached the land called Chamaetha (probably equated with Χαλιθᾶς known from the 591 CE campaign) north of Arbela, where he spent one week. Next, Heraclius surprisingly turned northwest and crossed the Great Zab on 1 December.³⁹⁰ In doing so, Heraclius likely pretended to retreat.³⁹¹ Twelve days later, the Romans won a critical victory on the plain of Nineveh on 12 December 627 CE.³⁹² After the battle Heraclius moved into the heartland of the Sasanian kingdom using the old Royal road: he thus crossed the Great Zab (21 December), and moved via Arbela and Kirkuk to Ctesiphon.³⁹³ Having captured the Sasanian capital, Heraclius proceeded back

386 The key name in 5.8.5 is *Νανισηγνῶν*, which remains unidentified. See Schreiner 1985, 312, n. 722 (who suggests that it is a tribal name). At any rate, the final battle took place after the two Roman contingents joined up in Armenia, and is located by Theophylact in the vicinity of an (unnamed) large lake. Lake Van is the most probable suggestion. See Whitby 1988, 303.

387 Whitby 1988, 302–303.

388 Whitby 1988, 304.

389 For the historical context and the itinerary, see Howard-Johnston 1999a, esp. 25–29; Howard-Johnston 1999b, 218–220; Kaegi 2003, 127, map. 3 (on p. 123).

390 Howard-Johnston 1999a, 25; Kaegi 2003, 159.

391 Kaegi 2003, 159.

392 Howard-Johnston 1999a, 25; Kaegi 2003, 160–163.

393 Kaegi 2003, 170–171.

across the Zagros to Atropatene (reached by 15 March 628 CE) and next finally to northern Roman Mesopotamia.³⁹⁴

As for Adiabene, it is important to note that Heraclius crossed the Great Zab on December 21 and the Little Zab already by December 23, 627 CE, and would go on to spend more time in Karkā de Beth Selōk where he celebrated Christmas.³⁹⁵ Thus, Adiabene became the scene of a rapid Roman march rather than the subject of conquest and occupation. Although the Romans looted several locations on their march to Ctesiphon and next back across the Zagros to Atropatene, these were mainly royal palaces and strongholds, and the sources report on Heraclius' contacts with local Christians (especially in Karkā de Beth Selōk).³⁹⁶ The war ended without major territorial changes, and Adiabene remained part of the Sasanian kingdom until the Arab conquest in 636 CE.³⁹⁷

9.10 Adiabene within the Sasanian Kingdom

Information on the structure of the Sasanian kingdom and the history of its regions can be obtained from several types of sources.³⁹⁸ First, we possess two important royal inscriptions from Naqsh-e Rostam (also known as *Res Gestae Divi Saporis*) and from Paikuli.³⁹⁹ Second, there are several useful inscriptions on Sasanian administrative seals (from the fifth century on).⁴⁰⁰ Lastly, information on the regional administrative divisions can be obtained from Christian

394 Howard-Johnston 1999a, 25; Kaegi 2003, 172–174, 177–178; 184–188.

395 Kaegi 2003, 170.

396 Howard-Johnston 1999b, 219; Walker 2006, 146–147.

397 Howard-Johnston 1999a, 26–29.

398 A useful overview of the Sasanian administration, especially in its late stages, is offered by Morony 1982 (and Morony 1984, 131–137). See also Lukonin 1983 and Daryaei 2009, 123–149.

399 For the edition of *Res Gestae Divi Saporis*, see Huyse 1999. For the Paikuli inscription, see Skjærvø 1978, Skjærvø 1980, and Skjærvø 1983 who supersedes the older edition of Herzfeld 1924.

400 For Sasanian administrative seals, see the groundbreaking study of Gyselen 1989. See also Gyselen 2002 and Gyselen 2007, 142–143. Sasanian coins, especially their inscriptions indicating mint-marks and dates, may also be useful in this regard. For the Sasanian coins, see Paruck 1924.

sources including records of Church synods, letters, and biographies.⁴⁰¹ As a result, we can reconstruct a moderately accurate picture of ecclesiastical administration on the basis of the Christian sources. However, the problem is that although it is generally accepted that the Zoroastrian administration followed the provincial organization of the Sasanian state, the question remains as to what extent this rule applied to the Christian ecclesiastical administration (see Figure 77).⁴⁰²

Generally speaking, the Sasanian sources, *Res Gestae Divi Saporis* (Shapur I) and the Paikuli inscription (Narseh) indicate that the structure of the Sasanian kingdom did not essentially differ in the third and fourth centuries CE from that of the Parthians. The Sasanian ruler was a *šāhānšāh*—the King of Kings—who ruled over other kings having vassal positions. In this light, it is evident that the Sasanian kingdom (like the Parthian kingdom) included many lesser kingdoms (among others, Adiabene).⁴⁰³

Res Gestae Divi Saporis (composed after 260 CE, most likely between 260–262 CE⁴⁰⁴) enumerates kings, officials, and aristocrats of Shapur's empire (who being close to Shapur I, were entitled to the offering made for the benefit of their souls), as well as countries and peoples (Greek: *ethnē*) under his power.⁴⁰⁵ In this context, *RGDS* mentions Ardashir, king of Nōdšīragān [Adiabene], as the first vassal king entitled to the offering.⁴⁰⁶ In turn, *RGDS* enumerates Mēšān [Mesene], Asūrestān [Assyria], Nōdšīragān [Adiabene], and Arbāyestān [Arabia] as countries in Mesopotamia under Shapur I's power.⁴⁰⁷

Given the fact that Shapur I's father, the first ruler of the Sasanians, was named Ardashir I and that several other Sasanian vassal rulers later bore the same name, it may be speculated that Ardashir, king of Adiabene known from *RGDS*, was a member of the Sasanian royal family.⁴⁰⁸ At the same time, it has also been suggested that a local ruler in Adiabene may have adopted a name that appears to have been indicative of the Sasanian dynasty and as such was a sign of submission to the *šāhānšāh*.⁴⁰⁹ At least one example in the later history

401 The essential publications are Chabot 1902 (sources) and Fiey 1965 and 1968 (interpretation).

402 Morony 1982, 2–3.

403 Morony 1982, 4; Lukonin 1983, 701, 705; 729–720; Gyselen 1989, 78; Wiesehöfer 2001, 184–185; Olbrycht 2010a, 257–258. For a general overview, see Chaumont 1975, 89–156.

404 Huyse 1999b, 14–17.

405 Wiesehöfer 2001, 184–185.

406 Huyse 1999a, 57 (§44).

407 Huyse 1999a, 23 (§2).

408 Schottky 2004, 90.

409 Olbrycht 2010a, 225.

of the Sasanians can be given for such an endeavor, e.g. Artaxias (Artashir) IV, an Arsacid-Armenian prince who had to change his name to Ardashir after his nomination in Armenia by the Sasanian king, Wahram, in 422 CE.⁴¹⁰

Concerning the territorial extent of the province of Adiabene mentioned in *RGDS*, we have no precise hints. However, by a process of elimination of the territory (which was not occupied by other neighboring provinces, Arbāyestān and Asūrestān) and by analogy with the Late Sasanian situation, we can state with a great deal of likelihood that the province of Adiabene was not limited to Arbelitis, but at least included the territory around Nineveh. However, a closer delimitation of the territorial extent of Adiabene is not possible on the basis of *RGDS* alone.

The Paikuli inscription, commissioned by King Narseh in 293 CE, sheds more light on the administration of the Adiabene region in the late third century CE.⁴¹¹ Namely, it mentions *lšwmc'n MR'HY* and *glmykn*.⁴¹² The phrase *lšwmc'n MR'HY* can be identified as “a ruler of Lāšōm” and *glmykn* as Garmekān (Beth Garmai), known from Syriac sources.⁴¹³ Lāšōm' can be equated to the modern village of Lasīm on the road from Mosul to Baghdad, also within the borders of Garmekān.⁴¹⁴ Importantly, the fact that *glmykn* is mentioned in the Paikuli inscription next to Asūrestān, Hūzestān, and Syārzūr indicates that it also held the status of being a distinctive administrative unit.⁴¹⁵ Thus, Garmekān was already a Sasanian province separate from Adiabene/Nōdšīragān in 293/294 CE (and before the church acts of 410 CE).⁴¹⁶

From the fourth century AD onwards, we possess a number of Christian sources, especially the *Acts of the Martyrs* and the *Synodicon* (see chapter 8.1.5.), which enable us to reconstruct a moderately accurate picture of the Christian ecclesiastical administration, but also provide several insights into the Sasanian civil and religious administration of the region.

The Adiabene *Acts of Martyrs* mention several names of the rulers of Adiabene:

⁴¹⁰ Olbrycht 2010a, 236.

⁴¹¹ See Kettenhofen 1995a, 38–39.

⁴¹² Skjærvø 1983a, 42–43 (§32); 72–73 (§93).

⁴¹³ Henning 1954, 53, n. 2; Gignoux 1972, 22, 27; Chaumont 1975, 98–99; Skjærvø 1983b, 129; Kettenhofen 1995a, 38. See also Hoffmann 1880, 274–275.

⁴¹⁴ Fiey 1968, 54–60; Kettenhofen 1995a, 38.

⁴¹⁵ Kettenhofen 1995a, 38.

⁴¹⁶ Kettenhofen 1995a, 39.

- Ardashir, king of Adiabene (*malkā d-Ḥadyab*), persecuting Christians according to the Beth Garmai *Acts of Martyrs* (AMS 2.233.15; AMS 2.286.17).⁴¹⁷ The persecution took place during the reign of the Sasanian king Shapur II (309–379 CE), but most likely in the period after 344 CE.⁴¹⁸ This Ardashir cannot be equated with Ardashir known from *RGDS* for chronological reasons (ca. 344 CE for *AMS* and 260–262 CE for *RGDS*). Interestingly, Ardashir is called the brother of the Sasanian king Shapur (II). It therefore has been assumed that it is exactly Ardashir II who succeeded his brother Shapur II on the Sasanian throne in 379 CE (and who ruled in Adiabene before 379 CE).⁴¹⁹
- Pērōz-Tām-Šābūr, *marzbān* of Adiabene, persecutor of Christians under Shapur II (AMS 4.128.12).⁴²⁰
- Šābūr-Tām-Šābūr, *marzbān* and a military commander of Shapur II, active in the persecution of Christians in Adiabene (AMS 2.314.5, 2.387.4).⁴²¹
- Tām-Šābūr, *satrap* of Adiabene under Shapur II (AMS 2.387.8, AMS 2.388.6, AMS 2.388.8, AMS 2.389.7, AMS 2.391.4).⁴²²

It is important to stress that the mention of Ardashir, king of Adiabene during the reign of Shapur II, is the last reference to the existence of a *kingdom* in Adiabene during the Sasanian period. All other rulers of Adiabene, according to the *Acts of Martyrs*, did not have the status of a (lesser) king. It appears that 379 CE (Ardashir II replaces Shapur II in Ctesiphon) is the *terminus post quem* for the final end of the status of Adiabene as a *regnum minus* and its permanent status as a *šahr*—a province ruled by a non-royal appointee (*marzbān* or *satrap*) of the Sasanian king.

Furthermore, although the Paikuli inscription in 293/294 CE and the church acts in 410 CE (as well as, in fact, the *Acts of Martyrs*) show that Beth Garmai was an administrative unit distinct from Adiabene (Nōdšīragān), the overall geopolitical situation may occasionally have been more fluid; the *Acts* see Ardashir II, king of Adiabene as an active participant in the persecution of Christian individuals from other regions (Beth Garmai in particular, but also Kaškar). It follows that, depending on the geopolitical constellation of the

417 Wiessner 1967, 206, n. 3, 231, n. 1; Gignoux, C. Jullien, F. Jullien 2009, 38 (no. 45d).

418 Walker 2006, 116.

419 Nöldeke 1879a, 69, n. 2; Braun 1915, xiii; Peeters 1925, 264; Christensen 1944, 312; Frye 1984, 308 and n. 65; Morony 1982, 10; Olbrycht 2010a, 234. But see also Frye 1984, 316.

420 Gignoux, C. Jullien, F. Jullien 2009, 115 (no. 342).

421 Gignoux, C. Jullien, F. Jullien 2009, 127 (no. 388a).

422 Gignoux, C. Jullien, F. Jullien 2009, 133 (no. 414).

region, the ruler of Adiabene may have had some sort of influence over his southern neighbor, Beth Garmai.

The *Acts* also provide insight into the regional Zoroastrian organization in the Sasanian kingdom—the main Zoroastrian office was that of *mōbed* (*magōpat*) in Arbela, the capital of the province; the *mōbed* was in charge of a hierarchy of subordinate magi (*mgwšʾ*) and judges (*šhrkwst*) in unnamed districts.⁴²³ However, at the end of the Sasanian period, the main administrative center seems to have been relocated to Ḥazza, a village located 12 km southwest of Arbela.⁴²⁴ As a satellite military and administrative center, located outside the main city of the region, Ḥazza was apparently chosen for greater efficiency and control.⁴²⁵

In turn, the *Synodicon* provides several important details concerning the ecclesiastical organization of the region of Adiabene. In light of the data obtained from the *Synodicon*, Adiabene (*Hdyb*, Beth Ḥadyab in Syriac) had its ecclesiastical center at Arbela, whose Nestorian bishop, holding the rank of the metropolitan, presided over a series of dioceses in the region in 410 CE: Beth Nūhadrā (along the eastern bank of Tigris from Āwānā opposite Balad to Mt. Jūdī), Beth Dāsen (on the right bank of the Great Zab above Marga), Beth Bgāš (on the left bank of the upper course of the Great Zab in north-eastern Adiabene), Ramōnīn (the mountainous area northeast of Arbela), and Dabarinos (or Rabarinḥesn, which remains unidentified).⁴²⁶ The dioceses of Nineveh and of Maʿalta are in turn attested in Christian councils from 554 and 497 CE respectively. All of these dioceses formed distinctive regions within the larger area of Adiabene. In light of Christian ecclesiastical data from Adiabene, it is evident that Adiabene cannot be confined to the area confined by the Zab rivers, and such a territorial extent strongly conforms to the area of Hellenistic and Parthian Adiabene, which reached as far as the Khabur River. Furthermore, the data shows that the metropolitan of Adiabene did not include the area south of the Little Zab. Namely, the ecclesiastical administration of Beth Garmai was independent from the metropolitanate of Erbil. It was the bishop of Karkā de Beth Selōk who was the metropolitan of Beth Garmai. As of 410 AD, his metropolitanate included the dioceses of Šahrgard, Lāšōmʿ, Arēwān, Rādānī, and Ḥrbat Glāl.⁴²⁷

423 Abbeloos 1890, 75; Peeters 1925, 269, 279, 281–282; Morony 1982, 10; C. Jullien 2004, 167.

424 Morony 1982, 10–11; Morony 1984, 132.

425 Morony 1982, 10–11; Morony 1984, 132.

426 See Labourt 1904, 92–99; DHGE 1, 1912, 561–563; Sachau 1919, 52–57; Morony 1982, 10–18; Morony 1984, 131–137 (although Morony's focus is on Late-Sasanian/Early-Islamic period).

427 Morony 1982, 14–15.

The Iranian name of Adiabene is also referenced on Sasanian seals, dated on paleographical grounds to the sixth century AD,⁴²⁸ but it should be stressed that the usual term is not Nōdšīragān (as in RGDS) but rather Nōd-Ardaxšīragān.⁴²⁹ The etymology of the Parthian-Middle-Persian *ntwšrk'n* and *nwthštrk'n* has been explained by E. Lipiński (see chapter 8.3.2.) as derived from the Semitic *ntwnšr* ("given by Ishtar"). In turn, Nōd-Ardaxšīragān appears much later and may in fact be a different name that is only apparently similar to the previous name, but in fact represents a different lexeme consisting of the Iranian words "Nōd" and "Arda(x)šīr".⁴³⁰

Remarkably, some seals read *Āmārgar of Garmēgān* (and) *Nōd-Ardašīragān*.⁴³¹ The formulation suggests the existence of the finance official (*āmārgar*) of the territories of Adiabene and Beth Garmai, which combined administrative jurisdiction of the two provinces into a single larger jurisdiction during the Late Sasanian period.⁴³² It has been speculated that this situation may go back as late as 446 CE, when Sūrēn Pahlav was supposedly called the *vice-dastbar* (*dastbarhamdād*) of Ḥadyab and Beth Garmai.⁴³³ It follows that, generally speaking, the territory south of the Little Zab (Beth Garmai) was a distinctive region that could at times have been administratively connected with (or supervised by) Adiabene.

Important changes in the structure of the Sasanian kingdom occurred in the Late Sasanian period.⁴³⁴ First, the administrative reform was carried out by King Khusro I (531–579 CE): his kingdom was divided into four quarters

428 See Gyselen 1989, 78–79; Gyselen 2007, 142–143.

429 Luther 2015, 284, n. 35. Although in Gyselen 2007, 142 (Seal I21) we again find the name Nōdšīragān (see below).

430 Gignoux 1986, 136 (no. 695). It should also be noted that Gyselen 1989, 78–79 and Gyselen 2002, 162–163, 183–184 suggest the early Sasanian province of Nōdšīragān was divided in Late Sasanian times, and the province of Nōd-Ardaxšīragān occupied only part of the territory once belonging to Adiabene.

431 See Gyselen 2007, 142 (Seal I21). Remarkably, more recently published seals from the Saeedi family collection bear the reading *nwt'ltštlk'n*. In the Saeedi family collection, seal B203 attests to the province of Nōd-Ardaxšīragān (*nwt'ltštlk'n*), and several other seals (see Gyselen 2002, 162–163; B511–517, B599–B606; see Gyselen 2007, 142–143: 1/21-1-24) again mention the office of *āmārgar of nwt'ltštlk'n* and Garmekān. See also Luther 2015, 287.

432 Morony 1982, 10.

433 Hoffmann 1880, 51 ("sehr unsicher"); Morony 1982, 10. But see also C. Jullien 2004, 148.

434 See Lukonin 1983, 750, 754–762; Daryaee 2009, 124–126, and Morony 1982 (as well as Morony 1984, 126–127, 131–137) who is essentially followed here.

oriented to the points of the compass.⁴³⁵ Adiabene—Nōd-Ardaxšīragān and its neighbors—Arbāyestān, Asūrestān, Mēšān [Mesene] (in contrast to the early Sasanian period, western Media—*Jabal* was also added to this unit)—were included in a large unit called the *Quarter of the West* (*Khvarvarān*).⁴³⁶ Each quarter had a military governor called *spāhbed*, who had a *pādgōspān* as his lieutenant.⁴³⁷ Internally, each quarter of the Sasanian Empire was divided into provinces. Each province (with the suffix *ustān* / *ōstān*) was divided into districts (*šahr* or *kūra*), which in turn included many sub-districts (*tasōk* or *rustāq*) around small towns or villages.⁴³⁸

In this context, it should again be stressed that no sources point to the existence of the kingdom of Adiabene (after Ardashir II). What is more, given the political realities—a strong position of the *spāhbed* of the quarter of the West, Šahrbarāz,⁴³⁹ as well as the existence of another separate office in charge of the financial administration (*āmārgar*)⁴⁴⁰—it is highly unlikely that a vassal monarchy was retained in Adiabene. Certainly there is no historical record that would suggest the existence of monarchy in Adiabene after the 4th century CE. At the same time, the region had local elites and the position of the ruler of this province must have had some significance. In one case we hear of a certain Denḥa bar Šemraita as the “grand prince of all the region of Adiabene” in the late sixth century CE.⁴⁴¹

In the early seventh century CE Khusro II may have again reorganized the Sasanian kingdom into some 35 administrative districts.⁴⁴² In the *Quarter of the West* seven districts were probably created: one around Nisibis (Arbāyestān); one north and east of the upper Tigris (Nōd-Ardaxšīragān); one east of the middle Tigris (Garmekān); one between the middle Tigris and the middle Euphrates (Ard Jukha); one between the lower Tigris and the lower Euphrates (Ard Babil); one along the lower Tigris (Ard Kaškar); and a frontier district southwest of the middle Euphrates around Hira.⁴⁴³ Again, it should be stressed that an administrative unit of Nōd-Ardaxšīragān was not limited

435 Morony 1982, 4; Morony 1984, 126.

436 Morony 1982, 4; Morony 1984, 126.

437 Morony 1982, 4; Morony 1984, 126.

438 Morony 1982, 6; Morony 1984, 129.

439 Morony 1982, 4.

440 Morony 1982, 4.

441 Fiey 1965, 160; Morony 1982, 10.

442 See Morony 1982, 4–6; Morony 1982, 13. This reconstruction is based on Morony's analysis of the Armenian *Geography of Ananias Širak* and the Middle Persian catalogue of the provincial capitals of Iran, the *Šahristānīhā i Ērān*.

443 Morony 1982, 4–6, 13; Morony 1984, 126.

to Arbelitis, but included the Nineveh area as well, although it was separated from Garmekān. Remarkably, the province of Nōdšīragān was also occasionally called Atūria or Āthōr; that is, it bore the name after its northern territory around Nineveh.⁴⁴⁴ This equivalent name of Nōd-Ardaxšīragān can be found in the *Legend of Mar Qardagh* (legendary references to kings of Āthōr),⁴⁴⁵ and, more importantly, in the acts of the synod of 585 CE which mention a certain Mar Henana as a metropolitan of the Ātōrayē.⁴⁴⁶

To conclude, two very different stages in the history of Sasanian Adiabene can be distinguished. In the third and fourth centuries CE, Adiabene held the status of a minor kingdom within the Sasanian state. Two kings of Adiabene-Nōdšīragān are known: Ardashir I (of Adiabene) around 260–262 CE, and Ardashir II around 344 CE (Ardashir II of Adiabene, later the Sasanian King of Kings). It appears likely that the royal dynasty in Sasanian Adiabene was a branch of the Sasanian ruling family. After the fourth century CE, Adiabene became a province whose non-royal ruler was appointed by the Sasanian monarch. In the fifth or sixth century CE, Adiabene received a new official name—Nōd-Ardaxšīragān, which probably echoed (well-developed by then) traditions about the rule of the Ardashir dynasty in Adiabene.

Throughout all of its Sasanian history, Adiabene included the territory of Arbelitis and the territory on the east bank of the Tigris between the Assyrian Khabur and the Great Zab. From the late third century CE onwards, Garmekān was a distinct administrative unit that may have however been occasionally connected to Adiabene as part of a larger single administrative unit.

9.11 Summary and Conclusions

In the current state of the research, the kingdom of Adiabene appears to have originated in the second century BCE within the context of the gradual collapse of the Seleucid suzerainty in Mesopotamia. Its independence, however, ended quickly with the advent of the Parthians in the region. It is most likely the Parthian King Mithradates I who conquered Adiabene in approximately 145–141 BCE. After Mithradates II's consolidation of the Parthian Empire (122–95 BCE), Adiabene remained an integral part of the Parthian and Sasanian kingdoms (and the short supremacy of the Armenian King Tigranes II in the Near East should be understood as only a change of accents within the

444 Morony 1982, 13.

445 Hoffmann 1880, 17; Morony 1982, 13.

446 Chabot 1902, 423; Morony 1982, 13.

Parthian Commonwealth). It appears that beginning in the late first century BCE (Monobazos I) Adiabene significantly rose in importance on the international scene as one of the most important vassal kingdoms in the Parthian kingdom. Monobazos I, Izates II, Monobazos II, and Mebarsapes (early second century CE) belonged to the key members of the Parthian elites gathered around the Parthian King of the kings. In the current state of the research, it appears that Adiabene (like all of the other lesser kingdoms) lost its formal status as a kingdom in the course of the Sasanian period. Instead, Adiabene was an important administrative unit with own local elites who were deeply Iranized and eagerly took part in the social life of the Sasanian aristocracy.

The political importance of Adiabene in the first century CE should be neither underestimated nor exaggerated. The position of Izates II towards Artabanos II, Vardanes, Gotarzes II, and Vologases I, as well as the role of Monobazos II during the Roman-Parthian War in 58–63 CE clearly show that Adiabene was one of the key kingdoms for Parthian kings. At the same time, it was still only one of many regions in an extensive territory controlled by the Parthians. Thus, the speculation that Izates II may have hoped to create a "Jewish alliance based on Palaestina to the west, and Babylonia to the east and dominated by Adiabene itself at the north"⁴⁴⁷ overestimates the country's potential.

The growth of political importance also led to the expansion of Adiabene's core territory. Namely, Gordyene was incorporated into Adiabene at least beginning with the reign of Monobazos I (late first century BCE) probably until 298 CE. Furthermore, Adiabene also expanded west of the Tigris onto the Mesopotamian plain, although precise stages of this process remain are not well documented. What is more, the political situation in this region may have been fluid. This is first due to the presence of several local geopolitical and ethnic entities and second because of the advent of the Romans. The latter gradually expanded their state of territorial possession and political influence east of the Euphrates from the second century CE on. In this area Nisibis became part of Adiabene during the reign of the Parthian king Artabanos II (between 30–40 CE, perhaps 37–40 CE), and still belonged to Adiabene in the time of Pliny the Elder (until 79 CE). The affiliation of Nisibis in the second century CE is less certain. In 115 CE and 193–195 CE, kings of Adiabene (together with rulers of Osrhoene) had territorial demands with regard to the region around Nisibis, and definitely belonged to major players in this area by controlling a number of strongholds, including Singara in 115 CE, which stood at the crossroads of important communication lines in the region. It appears the Roman expansion

447 Neusner 1969, 66–67.

in northern Mesopotamia gradually pushed away Adiabene's presence west of the Tigris beyond the line of the Khabur River and the Sinjar Mountains. From the third century CE on, Adiabene appears to be mainly limited to the line of the Tigris River.

A look at the history of Roman military campaigns in the region reveals that revisions should be made to many of the false impressions about the Roman presence and influence in Adiabene. First, although Adiabene was affected by several Roman campaigns (Trajan in 115–116 CE, Septimius Severus in 195 CE, Caracalla in 216 CE, Galerius in 298 CE, Constantius II in 343 CE, Arethas in 541 CE, Khusro II in 590 CE, and Heraclius in 627 CE), none of these cases (perhaps in contrast to popular opinion) attest to a long-term occupation or incorporation of the territory (east of the Tigris). Second, in the case of Trajan's and Septimius' campaigns, a Roman invasion of the Adiabene core territory east of the Tigris is hardly documented. It is most likely that both campaigns, frequently associated with considerable Roman territorial gains against Adiabene, were limited to the territory west of the Tigris. Third, in several cases (Caracalla in 216 CE, Constantius II in 343 CE, and Arethas in 541 CE), Roman military campaigns that took place on the east bank of the Tigris in Adiabene were but short violent scorched earth campaigns conducted mainly for plunder. Fourth, in a very few cases when a deep penetration by Roman legions into Adiabene is documented, we may speak only about rapid military campaigns which that did not yield any serious geopolitical consequences (Khusro II in 590 CE, Heraclius in 627 CE).

Summary: A Regional Perspective and General Issues

The aim of this summary is to take a look at the history and culture of Sophene, Gordyene, and Adiabene in a broader regional context and through the perspective of frequently discussed broader themes, such as the disintegration of the Seleucid Empire, the structure of the Parthian (and Sasanian) kingdom(s), and the impact of Roman success in the military and political competition against the Parthian and Sasanian kingdoms on northern Mesopotamia.

There can be no doubt that the political origin of independent monarchies in Sophene, Gordyene, and Adiabene was connected with macro-political developments in the Near East in the third and second centuries BCE. First and foremost, the countries in question emerged onto the political scene in the context of a political vacuum in the region: the Seleucids started to lose their grip on much of their territory in the East, but the Parthians had not yet proceeded to impose their hegemony in Mesopotamia.

From the mid-third century BCE onwards, the eastern border of the Seleucid Empire became considerably shaken and began to edge backwards.¹ Both the process of the emancipation of local satraps in Iran and the Parthians' appearance as important players in the region led to the Seleucids' gradual loss of influence and territory in the East.² In other regions, especially in Armenian territories³ and northern parts of Asia Minor (Galatians),⁴ Seleucid suzerainty also became only nominal. It was only with the reign of Antiochos III (the Great) that these tendencies were effectively stopped (during his eastern campaign in ca. 212–205/204 BCE), but this only lasted for a short period of time.⁵ Antiochos III's defeat by the Romans at Magnesia in 190 BCE and the peace at Apamea in 188 BCE led to the loss of the majority of Asia Minor and the Armenian territories north of the Tauros Mountains.⁶ Furthermore, from short

1 Bivar 1983, 28–35; Schippmann 1980, 14–23; Wolski 1999, 33–56.

2 Bivar 1983, 28–35; Schippmann 1980, 14–23; Wolski 1999, 33–56.

3 Schmitt 1964, 37–38; Sherwin-White, Kuhrt 1993, 190–197; Schottky 1989, 76–139; Facella 2006, 137–198.

4 Will 1966, 261–270; Kobes 1996, 113–163.

5 Schmitt 1964, 32–107; Sherwin-White, Kuhrt 1993, 188–215; Grainger 2015a, 55–97.

6 Paltiel 1979, 30–41; Sherwin-White, Kuhrt 1993, 210–216; Grainger 2015a, 130–186.

and mid-term perspectives, the peace treaty took a heavy toll on Seleucid financial resources.⁷

After the death of Antiochos III, the strength of the Seleucid kingdom and its international position gradually diminished. Two factors in particular contributed to this state of affairs:⁸ first, internecine struggles for the Seleucid throne between two Seleucid lines (successors of two sons of Antiochos III, Seleukos IV and Antiochos IV Epiphanes),⁹ often deliberately manipulated by Rome; second, the growth of Parthian power in the East.¹⁰ In this political context, the origins of the emergence of new geopolitical entities within the territory that had once belonged to the Seleucids can be better understood.

At the same time, it has been stressed in recent scholarship that the Seleucid Empire cannot be perceived as a strongly centralized state at any stage of its existence.¹¹ At its greatest territorial extent, the Seleucid Empire stretched all the way from Asia Minor to the Indus River Valley. Thus, it included many different regions and *ethnē*, usually heterogonous in geography, ethnicity, and culture. From the third century BCE, some thirty important regions in the Seleucid Empire can be distinguished: Lydia, Hellespontine Phrygia, Greater Phrygia, Mysia, Lykaonia, Kilikia, Karia, Lykia, Pamphylia, Kappadokia, Kommagene, Phoenicia and Coele Syria, Sophene and Greater Armenia, Mesopotamia, Babylonia, Parapotamia, the Red Sea District, Apolloniatis, Media, Susiane, Persis, Arachosia with Gedrosia, Parthia, Hyrcania, Margiana, Aria, Karmania, Drangiana, and Bactria-Sogdiana.¹²

What is more, it is widely acknowledged that the Seleucids, heirs to Alexander the Great and the Achaemenids, inherited and adopted the main social and governmental structures of their predecessors, including the main principles of the territorial administration.¹³ Generally speaking, the Seleucid Empire was composed of separate imperial administrative provinces (*satrapies*) as well as other areas under different forms of obligation to the king.¹⁴ In this context, three main models explaining the structure and the model of governance of such a vast territory have been suggested to date. First, according to some scholars, the Seleucid Empire had a federal structure—it

7 Sherwin-White, Kuhrt 1993, 218–219.

8 Sherwin-White, Kuhrt 1993, 217–229.

9 Habicht 1989; Ehling 2008, 111–178; Grainger 2015b, 36–76.

10 See Wolski 1999; Dąbrowa 2005; Olbrycht 2010b.

11 For an overview, see Engels 2011.

12 Enumeration based on Sherwin-White, Kuhrt 1993, 45, with modifications by the author.

13 Tarn 1984, 1–4; Bickermann 1966; Briant 1994.

14 Sherwin-White, Kuhrt 1993, 42. See Bickermann 1938; Musti 1966; Capdetrey 2007.

was a political alliance (*symmachia*) between the Seleucid monarch and various political entities as equal powers (especially free cities, *ethnē*, and local dynasts).¹⁵ Second, the “tributary” model stresses that the *modus vivendi* between the Seleucid monarchs and the various political entities in their state was in fact a tribute due to the Seleucid government.¹⁶ Third, some scholars have suggested that the Seleucid state had a feudal structure where a central power (the Seleucid king) had very restricted chances of controlling local administrators, whose roles frequently became hereditary and sometimes *de facto* independent.¹⁷ Whatever model is preferred, it should be emphasized that the relations between the Seleucid kings and the historical regions of the local elites (who held the offices of the satraps) were a great deal more multi-dimensional than simple tributaries as they followed a number of institutional acts, especially formal submission, recognition of Seleucid suzerainty, the due tribute, marriage alliances, and the ceding of troops.¹⁸

In this context, Seleucid history contains many cases of attempts by local satraps to gain independence from their overlords. The territory of Asia Minor especially witnessed the rise of several local dynasties in the first half of the third century BCE: the Attalid dynasty at Pergamon (which goes back to Philetairos, satrap of Seleukos I), the Bithynian dynasty (Bas, Zipoites I, Zipoites II), the Mithridatic dynasty in Pontos, and the Ariarathes dynasty in Kappadokia.¹⁹ It is also widely held that the first members of the local fratarakā dynasty in Fars also started their rule as Seleucid satraps in the late third or early second century BCE.²⁰ The second half of the third century BCE was also rich in satrapal rebellions.²¹ For instance, during the reign of Seleukos II, Andragoras successfully revolted as a Seleucid satrap of Parthia in ca. 245 BCE, as did Diodotos in Bactria in ca. 240–239 BCE.²² During the early reign of Antiochos III, several other satraps also revolted but were defeated: Achaïos in Asia Minor (ca. 220 BCE), and Molon and his brother Alexander “in the upper provinces” (Persia and Media in ca. 222 BCE).²³ After the death of King Antiochos IV Epiphanes, Timarchos, his satrap in Media, also became independent and even managed

15 Bickermann 1938, 133; Musti 1966, 61–197; Schmitt 1964, 95–96.

16 Capdetrey 2007, 130–133.

17 Engels 2011, 19–36. This model in fact goes back to Widengren 1965; Wolski 1967; Widengren 1969; Widengren 1976.

18 Engels 2011, 22.

19 Will 1966, 261–270; Kobes 1996, 113–163.

20 Wiesehöfer 1991; Wiesehöfer 1994b.

21 See Wolski 1999, 33–56, 62–82; Schmitt 1964, 116–150, 158–175; Ehling 2008, 122–130.

22 Wolski 1999, 122.

23 Schmitt 1964, 85, 128.

to extend his rule to Babylonia before he was defeated by Demetrios I in ca. 160 BCE.²⁴ Likewise, Hyspaosines was appointed as a governor of Charakene by Antiochos IV Epiphanes in ca. 166/165 BCE, and he became independent after the death of Antiochos IV Epiphanes (including the assumption of the royal title between 140 and 127 BCE) and remained so until his death. The Parthians acknowledged Hyspaosines' dynasty in ca. 122/121 BCE in return for formal recognition of the Parthian suzerainty.²⁵

Thus, the macro-political situation in the Near East in the third and second centuries BCE offered fertile ground for independence. At the same time, another important factor was the existence of local conditions leading to the emergence of local geopolitical powers. In Sophene (see chapters 3.1 and 3.2), the important factor was the existence of distinctive regional lines of the Orontid dynasty ruling in Sophene and Kommagene (Samos, Arsames, and Xerxes before the time of Antiochos III [212 BCE] and the Zariadres dynasty afterwards). As for Adiabene (see chapters 9.1.), it appears that the key factors for the rise of such a geopolitical entity were both the long continuity of local administrative borders and the old tradition of local government in the urban centers of the once glorious kingdom of Assyria. It appears that Arbela may not have shared the same scale of destruction as Ashur and Nineveh during the collapse of the Assyrian Empire, or it at least recovered earlier than the other Assyrian cities.²⁶ This apparently contributed to Arbela's leading role in northern Mesopotamia in the age of the formation of new geopolitical entities in the Near East in the third and second centuries BCE. In this context, favorable macro-political circumstances and an affluent agricultural environment must have led to the emergence of an important transregional geopolitical entity—the kingdom of Adiabene. The reign of Abdissar, the first king of Adiabene (see chapter 9.1), is known to us only through his coinage, which can be dated to ca. 164 BCE (after the reigns of Seleukos IV and Antiochos IV Epiphanes) exclusively on stylistic grounds.²⁷ It has been suggested that Abdissar was appointed by Antiochos IV Epiphanes (like Hyspaosines in Charakene),²⁸ which is plausible but impossible to prove. Although less is known about the emergence of the kingdom of Gordyene (whose first king is referred to as late as in 71/70 BCE; see chapter 6.2), there can be no doubt that this kingdom had a very strong ethnic background at its origin: the economically sufficient and warlike tribe

24 Ehling 2008, 122–130.

25 Schuol 2000, 291–300.

26 See Curtis 2003.

27 Marciak, Wójcikowski 2016.

28 Grabowski 2011, 133.

of the Karduchoi expanded beyond its natural borders in the mountainous zone south of the Bohtan river (see chapter 6.1) and established themselves as the sole rulers in the natural sway of the Upper Tigris Valley between the modern Batman and Khabur rivers (see chapter 4). Perhaps the foundation of the kingdom of Gordyene occurred in the latest phase of the Seleucid dissolution in Mesopotamia (e.g., 140–122/121 BCE, that is, in times of renewed fighting between the Parthians and the Seleucids and local dynasts).

It should also be stressed that the Hellenistic period brought about not only the rise of many “lesser kingdoms” in northern Mesopotamia, but also many changes in its material culture. From major agricultural and technological innovations (e.g., bell-shaped sunken silos for grain, hourglass-shaped mills) to objects of everyday use (domestic and public architecture, pottery, and coins), Hellenistic culture spread all over northern Mesopotamia. At the same time, it appears to have been more influential in an urban context, where monuments of Greco-Roman culture (in the context of “high culture,” such as theaters, baths, and amphitheaters) remained visible for many centuries (despite changes to their own character over time) until Late Antiquity. It should also be noted that the least is known about Hellenization in Gordyene (see chapter 5), and, given its highly autarkical character, it is possible that it was more superficial there than in Sophene (see chapter 2) and Adiabene (see chapter 8), and as such was perhaps limited mainly to the appearance of new useful technologies and objects in agriculture, economy, and architecture.

Small geopolitical entities could profit from a favorable turn of events on the international political scene, but they could equally be endangered by the advent of new superpowers.

From the invasion of Parthia in ca. 238 BCE under Arsakes I (247–217 BCE),²⁹ the Arsacid dynasty began to gradually build up its position and influence in Hellenistic Iran. The next territorial acquisition of the Parthians was Hyrcania in 235 BCE.³⁰ The first Seleucid intervention under Seleukos II against the Parthians ended in fiasco in 230 BCE.³¹ It was only Antiochos III who was able to gain some success in a difficult campaign against the Parthians in 209 BCE, which ended with a peace agreement.³² It appears that both sides benefited: Arsakes II (190–175 BCE) retained his factual autonomy, while Antiochos III gained formal recognition of his suzerainty.³³ His successor, Antiochos IV

29 Olbrycht 2010a, 162–163; Dąbrowa 2012, 168.

30 Olbrycht 2010a, 163; Dąbrowa 2012, 168.

31 Wolski 1999, 57–60; Olbrycht 2010a, 164.

32 Wolski 1999, 61–73; Olbrycht 2010a, 164.

33 Wolski 1999, 61–73, 122; Olbrycht 2010a, 164.

Epiphanes, did not reach as far as Parthia during his eastern campaign (165–164 BCE), but dealt instead with other regions in western Iran.³⁴

The era of great Parthian conquests started with Mithradates I (170–138 BCE). Mithradates I conquered Bactria in ca. 160–155 BCE,³⁵ Greater Media (most likely together with Media Atropatene) in circa 148–141 BCE,³⁶ northern Mesopotamia (signs of violent destruction in Nimrud) in ca. 145–141 BCE,³⁷ and finally Babylonia in 141 BCE.³⁸ However, the next two decades witnessed more renewed fighting between the Parthians and the local kings of Elymais and Charakene, as well as two major attempts of the Seleucids to regain Babylonia. In 140 BCE, Demetrios II Nikator mounted a counterattack, aiming for Babylonia and Media.³⁹ While the Seleucids were able to gain control of Babylonia, they were next defeated in Media in 139 or 138 BCE, and Demetrios II Nikator himself was captured and imprisoned.⁴⁰ In 130 BCE, Antiochos VII Sidetes again invaded Mesopotamia with a large force and won several major battles, but his decision to scatter Seleucid troops for the winter camp in Media led to his final defeat and death at the hands of the Parthian forces under Phraates II in 129/128 BCE.⁴¹ The Seleucid attacks could also have been successful due to the support of the local Greek populations and the renewed resistance against the Parthians in Elymais and Charakene (as well as occasionally in Bactria and Persis), which were finally forced into submission in the 120s BCE (Charakene in 122/121 BCE).⁴²

The reign of Mithradates II (122–91 BCE) was a time of recovery and consolidation of former Parthian territorial gains in the East (Bactria, Media, Babylonia), as well as a period of acquisition of new territorial possessions—Greater Armenia and Mesopotamia as far as the Euphrates River.⁴³ Thus, the Parthian kingdom of Mithradates II stretched all the way from the Indus River Valley in the east to the Euphrates in the west, and the latter river became the approximate demarcation line of the Roman and Parthian empires for centuries. Mithradates II was also the first Parthian king who assumed the

34 Mittag 2006, 298–327; Grainger 2015b, 32–35.

35 Olbrycht 2010a, 166; Dąbrowa 2012, 169.

36 Olbrycht 2010a, 166–168; Olbrycht 2010b.

37 D. Oates, J. Oates 1958, 115–118; D. Oates 1968, 64.

38 McDowell 1935, 147 (numismatic evidence); Bivar 1983, 34; V.S. Curtis 2010, 10–11; Dąbrowa 2012, 169.

39 Debevoise 1938, 22–28; Ehling 2008, 183–185; Grainger 2015b, 83–87.

40 Debevoise 1938, 22–28; Ehling 2008, 183–185; Grainger 2015b, 83–87.

41 Debevoise 1938, 31–35; Sherwin-White, Kuhrt 224–225.

42 Olbrycht 2010a, 167–168; Dąbrowa 169–170.

43 Debevoise 1938, 22–28; Olbrycht 2010a, 171–175; Dąbrowa 2012, 170–172.

old Achaemenid title King of Kings (attested in ca. 108/107 in Babylonian astronomical diaries), which certainly both matched Mithradates II's recent achievements and expressed his further political ambitions.⁴⁴

The question arises as to when Sophene, Gordyene, and Adiabene were incorporated into the Parthian kingdom. There can be no doubt that Adiabene (see chapter 9.1) was first conquered by the Parthians in ca. 145–141 BCE, as is indicated by archaeological data from Nimrud. The question remains open as to what status Adiabene had between 140 and 122/121 BCE, when the Parthian hold on the territory of Mesopotamia was questioned by both the Seleucids and other local kingdoms. As far as Gordyene is concerned (see chapter 6.2), there is no direct data to answer this question. Two possibilities are that Gordyene was either conquered together with Adiabene by Mithradates I in ca. 145–141 BCE, or only by Mithradates II (122–87 BCE), whose conquests reached farther west than those of Mithradates I as they included Greater Armenia and northern Mesopotamia as far as the Euphrates River. In this respect, there is no direct data for Sophene, either (see chapter 3.3). However, there can be no doubt that the Parthian conquests reached as far as the Euphrates only in the time of Mithradates II (122–87 BCE, but before the attack of Tigranes II in ca. 95 BCE), and this is the most likely setting for the inclusion of Sophene in the Parthian Empire.

With the advent of the Parthians in the region, *regna minora* of northern Mesopotamia were doomed to lose their independence, but not necessarily their royal status, as they were to become part of the *Parthian Commonwealth*, a political and cultural cluster of regions with their local elites under the suzerainty of the Parthian king.⁴⁵ It is important to stress the nature of the Parthian suzerainty in the vast kingdom reaching from the Euphrates River to the Indus River Valley. Namely, while some areas (e.g., southern Mesopotamia, Media, and Parthia) were subjected to the central royal administration, most territory in the Parthian kingdom belonged to various kingdoms, princedoms, and cities that acknowledged the authority of the Parthian King of Kings but also enjoyed a great deal of autonomy.⁴⁶ This autonomy was, however, granted by the Parthian king for services rendered to him and was subject to his decision. Consequently, the relationship between the King of Kings and his subjects

44 Olbrycht 2010a, 171–175. By contrast, see also Shayegan 2011, 244.

45 See Chaumont 1975; de Jong 2013; Fowler 2010; B. Jacobs 2010b.

46 This character of the Parthian kingdom is often associated with decentralization and weakness. Yet, as can be seen from the archaeological record (infrastructural projects in particular), the Parthian state had a well-functioning imperial administration. See Hauser 2013b, 734–739.

could also involve a change in status and privileges, including titles, territory, and honorary and ritual prerogatives. In this context, the rise in importance of any local kingdom, especially Adiabene in the context of the mid-first century CE (see the relationship between Izates II and Artabanos II in chapter 9.2.3), did not necessarily have to mean the acquisition of independence from the Parthian king. To the contrary, it can be much better understood as a fluctuation of the balance of power within the Parthian Commonwealth. Of course, given how the kingdom was structured, power relations had to be constantly shaped, constructed, and negotiated.⁴⁷ Well-known examples of struggles between Arsacid contenders to the throne, tensions between rulers and nobles, and rivalries between various lesser kingdoms clearly show that the negotiation of power was not always easy.⁴⁸

Indeed, the balance of power between local geopolitical entities themselves could become an issue depending on the macro- and micro-political conditions. Local shifts of power became most tangible for Sophene and Gordyene by the first century BCE due to the rise in importance of two transregional players—Greater Armenia and Adiabene itself.

Indeed, the conquests of the Armenian King Tigranes II the Great, who started his reign as a Parthian vassal of Mithradates II, brought an end to the Hellenistic kingdom of Sophene, which was most likely directly incorporated into Tigranes II's kingdom of Greater Armenia in ca. 95 BCE (see chapter 3.3). After 66 BCE (the definite end of the era of Tigranes II's conquests), the area occupied by the Hellenistic kingdom of Sophene fell apart into several countries (see chapter 3.4–3.5) whose local elites never again managed to acquire royal status (the royal investitures of Tigranes the Younger in 66 BCE and Sohaemus in 54 CE came from outside and were ephemeral). Gordyene encountered a similar fate—Tigranes II removed its King Zarbienes in ca. 71/70 BCE and ruled independently over the territory of Gordyene, which remained part of Armenia even after Tigranes II's defeat by the Romans (see chapter 6.2). In the late first century BCE, Gordyene came under control of Adiabene until at least 115 CE (see chapter 6.3). However, it appears that Adiabene's dominance over Gordyene may have lasted much longer, possibly until 298 CE. Indeed, Adiabene stood at the height of its political importance in the first and second centuries CE (see chapters 9.2–9.5). Not only Gordyene, but also the Mesopotamian valley as far as Nisibis came under the influence of Adiabene

47 Fowler 2010, 70, 76.

48 And yet, the Parthian Empire survived twice as long as its predecessor, the Seleucid kingdom, and it has been claimed that this happened precisely because of the decentralized structure of power.

as one of the key players in northern Mesopotamia. Not surprisingly, the kings of Adiabene—Monobazos I, Izates II, Monobazos II, and Mebarsapes—are presented in ancient sources as key vassal rulers of the Parthian king. Thus, the importance of Adiabene on the international scene should neither be underestimated nor overestimated. On one hand, Adiabene was clearly one of the most important regions (equivalent to, e.g., Media Atropatene, Charakene, and Hyrcania) of the Parthian Empire; on the other hand, it was not an independent state with imperial ambitions of becoming the third major player in the Middle East next to Rome and Parthia (*contra* J. Neusner).⁴⁹

Another issue worthy of attention is the spread of Iranian culture in Mesopotamia. First, even before the advent of the Iranian kingdoms of the Parthians and the Sasanians, Iranian culture was clearly present in Sophene (see chapter 2). This presence apparently resulted from the heritage of Achaemenid rule in this area and must have been strengthened by the rule of the Orontid dynasty.⁵⁰ Similar phenomena could also be observed in other regions further westward of Sophene (e.g., Kommagene, Kappadokia, and Pontos), as well as in Greater Armenia.⁵¹ Another issue is the spread of Iranian culture in the Parthian and Sasanian kingdoms. The striking cultural and religious diversity of the Parthian kingdom has been widely recognized by both older and more recent scholarship.⁵² Spanning a vast geographical area from east to west, the Parthian kingdom included many cultures and religious traditions, such as those from old Oriental, Hellenistic, Iranian, Jewish, Buddhist, Indian, and Christian origins, among many others (which often escape any strict labelling).⁵³ It has also been frequently stressed that the Arsacid rulers, while themselves perhaps inclined towards Iranian and Hellenistic traditions, exhibited a great deal of tolerance towards different cultures and religions in their kingdom.⁵⁴ At the same time, examples of specifically Iranian culture abound within the confines of the Parthian kingdom, from Palmyra in the west (which actually did not belong to the Parthians) to the vast steppe lands in Central Asia.⁵⁵ It appears that two factors in particular contributed to this state

49 See Neusner 1964a, 60–66; Neusner 1969, 66–67.

50 Schottky 1989, 76–85; Facella 2006, 95–135.

51 Will 1966, 261–264; Kobes 1996, 113–163; Panitschek 1987–88; Briant 2002, 132–135; Schottky 1989, 76–85; Facella 2006, 95–135; Facella 2009, 383–384.

52 Colledge 1967, 98–165, 174–176; Eilers 1983, 481–504; Lang 1983, 505–536; B. Jacobs 2010a, 129–135; Hackl 2010b, 135–145.

53 A good overview is offered by Metzler 2012.

54 Colledge 1967, 104–114; Frye 1983, 229–233; Boyce 1987; B. Jacobs 2010a, 145–154; Zehnder 2012b, 44–52.

55 For an overview, see Colledge 1967, 98–165; Kawami 1987; B. Jacobs 2010a, 129–135.

of affairs. First, the affiliation of various regions with the Parthian kingdom involved a voluntary process of acculturation for local elites, who appropriated lifestyle elements from the Parthian court.⁵⁶ Second, in some cases it is known that local rulers may have been removed from their offices and replaced with members of the Arsacid royal family, strengthening both the central government and *ipso facto* contributing to the spread of the Parthian court lifestyle.⁵⁷

In this context, it is important to distinguish the sources and the extent of Iranization in northern Mesopotamia. In the case of Sophene (see chapter 2), it appears that its Iranian heritage goes back to Achaemenid times and may have later been closely connected with the influence of Iranian culture in Greater Armenia.⁵⁸ At any rate, its Iranian/Armenian character was definitely strong. Unlike Sophene, Gordyene and Adiabene were areas inhabited by a Semitic population. Gordyene (see chapter 5) may have been highly resistant to the influence of foreign cultures due to its highly autarkic character. In turn, Adiabene represents a different case (see chapter 8). While inhabited by a Semitic population that apparently carried on practicing old Semitic traditions, its local elites played an important role in the political and social life of both the Parthian and Sasanian kingdoms. Consequently, the degree of their acculturation to the Iranian culture of the ruling court was definitely high. Furthermore, the eastern frontier of Adiabene bordered on traditionally Iranian settlement areas and as such may have been exposed to the influx of an Iranian population to some extent.⁵⁹

It is important to note that significant changes occurred in both regional administration and cultural policy when the Parthians were replaced by the Sasanians in ca. 224 CE. While the structure of the early Sasanian kingdom did not essentially differ from that of the Parthians, a vast change took place after the third century CE.⁶⁰ The Sasanians abolished the relative autonomy of different regions (including lesser kingdoms and cities), which were integrated into a centralized state and directly governed by the royal bureaucracy. What is more, the Sasanian kings did not always follow the Parthian rulers in their tolerant approach towards various cultures and religions.⁶¹ In this context, Adiabene especially became subject to more intensive Iranization than before (see chapters 8.1.5 and 9.10). Not only did the elites of Adiabene take on

56 De Jong 2013, 159.

57 Hauser 2005, 198–199; Hauser 2013b, 738–739.

58 Garsoïan 1985; Russell 2004; Garsoïan, Mahé 1997.

59 Luther 2015, 278.

60 Lukonin 1983, 750, 754–762; Schippmann 1990, 92–102; Daryaee 2009, 124–126.

61 Christensen 1944, 141–178, 258–315; Frye 1983, 308–310; Schippmann 1990, 92–102.

more and more of an Iranian lifestyle (which was also the case in the Parthian period), but it appears that (unlike in the Parthian period) local Semitic cults may have largely succumbed to the spread of state-supported Zoroastrianism.

Beginning in the first century BCE, the area of northern Mesopotamia and Armenia became the scene of fierce competition between the superpowers of the time, Rome and Parthia (the latter was replaced in the third century CE by the Sasanians). Control over northern Mesopotamia was important to the political superpowers⁶² as this area lay at the crossroads of important lines of communication between Kappadokia, Greater Armenia, Media, and Babylonia (leading further to India): the Tomisa crossing of the Euphrates and the Ergani pass in the Tauros Mountains in Sophene, the Bitlis pass leading from the Tigris Valley over the Tauros to Greater Armenia and important Tigris river crossings in Gordyene and Adiabene, and, finally, a route along the Tigris to Babylonia and the Keli-Shin pass in the Zagros in Adiabene.

There can be no doubt that Rome gained the upper hand in military and political competition in the Upper Tigris region over the course of time. By 64 BCE, Pompey the Great was in position to set the political status of Sophene (see chapter 3.3), as was Emperor Nero in 63 CE on the eve of the Roman intervention in Greater Armenia (see chapter 3.4). The political status of Sophene until the end of the third century CE is not clear (due to the lack of sources; see chapter 3.4), and the situation may have been fluid. However, even the indirect political influence of Rome over Sophene is likely, as this area was strategically important to Rome for controlling access to both Armenia and Parthian Mesopotamia. Finally (see chapter 3.5), in 298 CE the territories of Sophene, Anzitene, Ingilene, and Sophanene (called *Transtigritanae regiones*) were ceded by the Sasanians and found themselves officially within the Roman sphere of influence (as were Arzanene and Gordyene, but only until 363 CE when they were reconquered by the Sasanians). The *Transtigritanae regiones* functioned as Roman principalities until the sixth century CE, when they were gradually incorporated into the provincial structure of the Byzantine state (partially in 527 CE, and completely in 536 CE).

It is, however, important to stress that Rome's success in this competition applied most to Sophene, to a lesser degree to Gordyene, and least to Adiabene. Namely, Gordyene's brief period of dependency on Rome occurred

62 In this context, it should be stressed that Greater Armenia was not an independent player in this competition, as it alone was subjected to the competition between the Romans and the Parthians (and later the Sasanians). What is more, Greater Armenia did not have an effective structure of central government controlling various local Armenian principalities (including the region of Sophene).

only between 298 and 363 CE (see chapter 6.5). In turn, despite popular opinion, Adiabene was never an integral part of the Roman Empire (see chapters 9.3–9.5 and 9.7–9.9). First, although we know of several Roman campaigns that affected Adiabene (Trajan in 115–116 CE, Septimius Severus in 195 CE, Caracalla in 216 CE, Galerius in 298 CE, Constantius II in 343 CE, Arethas in 541 CE, Khusro II in 590 CE, and Heraclius in 627 CE), a long-term occupation or incorporation of Adiabene's core territory (east of the Tigris) is not attested in any of these campaigns. Second, in the case of the campaigns of Trajan and Septimius, Roman military activity on the east bank of the Tigris is hardly documented. It is likely that in both cases, the Roman campaigns were limited to the territory west of the Tigris. Third, in several cases (Caracalla in 216 CE, Constantius II in 343 CE, and Arethas in 541 CE), Roman military campaigns indeed took place on the east bank of the Tigris in Adiabene, but they were only short, violent expeditions conducted mainly for plunder. Fourth, in the very few cases when a deep penetration by Roman legions into Adiabene is well-attested in ancient sources, the Roman campaigns were rapid military expeditions that did not yield any serious geopolitical consequences for the Mesopotamian territory east of the Batman River (Khusro II in 590 CE and Heraclius in 627 CE).

In recent decades, much has been written about the relationship between Rome and various smaller geopolitical entities in the ancient Near East.⁶³ This relationship has been described with a great variety of terms, both in ancient sources and modern scholarship. The most well-known ancient formula was “kings, allies, and friends of the Roman people” (“reges socii et amici populi romani”).⁶⁴ In turn, the terms “client kingship” and “friendly kings” have been used particularly often by modern scholars.⁶⁵ Although it has been widely recognized that no single term does full justice to the multidimensional realities and the conditions may have varied regionally, several general features of such relationships can be distinguished.⁶⁶ Namely, next to a certain degree of political subordination, the Romans expected peace and stability for Rome and its allies (as well as between its allies) in addition to prompt and effective military support in military campaigns whenever the necessity arose. It is less certain if client/friendly kingdoms were expected to pay tribute or taxes; if they did,

63 For an overview, see: Braund 1988; Coşkun 2005; Coşkun 2008a; Coşkun 2008b; Kaizer, Facella 2010; Baltrusch, Winter 2015.

64 Kaizer, Facella 2010, 16.

65 The first model was most extensively argued for by Badian 1958 and has remained very fashionable ever since. The second model goes back to Mommsen 1864, 326–354, but has recently been made famous by Braund 1984.

66 See Braund 1984, 181–191; Kaizer, Facella 2010, 19.

it was likely not on a regular basis. It is also disputable as to what extent Rome interfered in the internal policy of subordinate kingdoms, and it is usually believed that this sphere was left to the local rulers, although single cases of interference are known.

The history of Sophene clearly offers an attractive example for the debate on the Roman client/friendly kingship. First, it is tempting to understand Sophene's situation between 64 BCE and 298 CE (see chapters 3.3 and 3.4) as that of divided loyalty (as in the case of nearby Edessa).⁶⁷ Namely, instead of drawing precise borders on the map and classifying lesser kingdoms as unambiguously Roman or Parthian, we may acknowledge that Sophene's status varied from autonomy to various forms of submission towards Rome or Parthia. Furthermore, the status of the *Transtigritanae regiones* between 298 CE and their full incorporation into the structure of the Byzantine Empire in the sixth century (see chapters 3.5 and 3.6), though frequently labeled as unclear, in fact shows all of the main features of the client/friendly relationship between Rome and its subordinate countries. Furthermore, the study of the *Transtigritanae regiones* also yields at least one interesting case that scholars will add to the list of interesting examples in the client/friendly relationship between Rome and its subordinate kingdoms: in 387 CE, Roman officials intervened in Sophanene due to irregularity in collecting resources for payment of the tribute to Rome (see chapter 3.5).⁶⁸

Although the least is known about the political situation in Gordyene as a country in the Roman sphere of influence between 298 and 363 CE, the episode of Iovinianus (see chapter 6.5) makes us aware of the importance of forging close ties between Rome and local hereditary elites in client/friendly kingships. For Rome, this policy aimed to ensure the loyalty of the local elites in client/friendly countries.⁶⁹ At the same time, from the perspective of Oriental royal elites, the Roman policy of "hostages" also meant important opportunities—especially that of winning the benefits of Greco-Roman education. This is exactly what has been labeled "princely kindergarten" in recent discussion.⁷⁰

As far as Adiabene is concerned in the context of the discussion on the client/friendly kingship, it is most important to counter the perception of the

67 See Hartmann 2015, who aptly names the rulers of Edessa as "Herrscher mit geteilten Loyalitäten."

68 This episode also matches well with Millar's definition of a "two-level monarchy" and Davies' "nested hierarchy of kingships." See Millar 1996 and Davies 2002.

69 Dąbrowa 1987, 63–71; Strothmann 2012, 83–102; A.D. Lee 1991, 366–374.

70 Hekster 2010.

rulers of Adiabene as either “Roman vassals”⁷¹ or “Herrscher mit geteilten Loyalitäten.”⁷² Next to the lack of meaningful evidence for the incorporation of Adiabene into the Roman Empire (see chapters 9.3–9.5 and 9.7–9.9), it must be stressed that the geopolitical location of Adiabene was much different than that of the countries that were positioned directly on the Roman borderline of the Euphrates (such as Osroene and Sophene),⁷³ which existed for most of the history of the empire. Taking a look at the development of Roman provinces in the East, it becomes clear that it was as late as in 195 BCE when the Romans established the provinces of Osroene and Mesopotamia (Trajan’s creation of the province of Mesopotamia in ca. 115 BCE turned out to be ephemeral). At this moment, the formal border of the Roman Empire (the line of the Khabur River and the Sinjar Mountains) indeed reached Adiabene. To be precise, it touched on its western frontier, but not directly on its heartland in Arbelitis. In this context, it is also erroneous to apply to Adiabene the same kind of international pressure that other border countries located on the Euphrates—that is, on the Roman borderline—must have experienced for centuries (such as Osroene and Sophene).⁷⁴ Furthermore, it does not appear to be correct to interpret the international standing of the kings of Adiabene through the perspective of temporary crisis and war situations (Roman campaigns or Parthian domestic struggles) when submissions of minor Parthian/Sasanian rulers were usually opportunistic and short-lived.⁷⁵ Instead, despite a few brief moments of danger from Roman plundering and conquests, Adiabene was politically an integral part of the Parthian and Sasanian empires, first as their vassal kingdom (until the fourth century CE), and next as an important Sasanian administrative district.

71 Bertinelli 1976, 35.

72 See Hartmann 2015, who (in his otherwise excellent study) includes rulers of Adiabene among “Herrscher mit geteilten Loyalitäten.” Apparently, Luther 2015, who offers a very valuable overview of the history and culture of Adiabene, also does the same. The idea of “Roman Adiabene,” or at least the perception that rulers of Adiabene were able to choose to position themselves between the Parthians and the Romans, can also be found in Neusner 1964a, 60–66; Neusner 1969, 66–67.

73 This is of course an approximate statement, as borders in ancient times were not necessarily understood as strictly demarcated lines. See Wheeler 1991 and Schörner 2011.

74 Hartmann 2015.

75 Hartmann 2015. It is also controversial to point to Josephus’ *Ant.* 20:17–96 as evidence of the pro-Roman position of Adiabene (see Luther 2015). Ideological strains of this passage, including extremely pro-Roman inclinations, have been shown by Marciak 2014a. See also Atkinson 2015, 637.

When it comes to the influence of the Romans on the material culture of northern Mesopotamia, the impact was most clearly limited by the political history of the region. While no substantial remains of this background are known from the heartland of Adiabene (with only a few known from the Nineveh area), and only some temporary influence can be stated for Gordyene, many impressive Roman remains (especially in architecture and infrastructure spheres connected with the military) can still be found in Sophene. The fact is also that both Gordyene and Adiabene differed from Sophene in its Semitic background. This apparently lies behind a very different degree of the spread of the East-Syriac monastic culture in Late Antiquity. This phenomenon first applied to Gordyene, which lay very close to the heartland of this movement in the Tūr 'Abdīn mountains. Examples of this type of Syriac culture could also be found in the Great Zab River Basin, although to a lesser degree than in the mountains of Gordyene. By far the "least Syriac" was Sophene, which was apparently much more exposed to Greek Christianity from Antioch.

Sophene, Gordyene, and Adiabene were three important countries in northern Mesopotamia from the third century BCE until Late Antiquity. Although they all had different origins, the fact that they were located within the same region meant that they were exposed to the same historical challenges of world history, and they also shared many common cultural influences over the course of their history. In this study, their history and culture has been reconstructed fully for the first time, as far as the available data allows. At the end, let us again briefly emphasize three new conclusions. First, during its ancient history, the territory of Sophene certainly became subject to the influence of Iranian and Armenian cultures. This was not, however, the starting point of its history. On the contrary, our available historical sources make it clear that Sophene was not primarily inhabited by an Armenian population. Second, Gordyene was a highly distinctive region, to a great extent culturally isolated and economically autarkic, and was probably inhabited by a Semitic population. Third, Adiabene, though inhabited overwhelmingly by a Semitic population, was an integral part of the Iranian world in political terms, and its political elites were deeply Iranized in cultural terms. The political and cultural impact of the Romans on Adiabene should not be overestimated.

This study has offered the first-ever comprehensive treatment of the history and culture of Sophene, Gordyene, and Adiabene. Although much is known, still much remains unknown or uncertain. Therefore, let us hope that future historical research concerning the region will further explore regional connections between the countries in question and their local neighbors, both those that are currently well-known (like Kappadokia, Osrhoene, Hatra, and Greater Armenia) and those about which our knowledge is still

insufficient (for instance, the area of Nisibis). Broadly speaking, more research on Hellenistic Armenian coinage is also warranted. Finally, let us hope that future surveys and excavations in southeastern Turkey and Iraqi Kurdistan will reveal new meaningful data that will allow us to better understand the history and culture of northern Mesopotamia in the Hellenistic, Roman, and Partho-Sasanian eras.

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Figures



FIGURE 1 Ancient Near East in the Roman-Parthian period (after Olbrycht 2013).

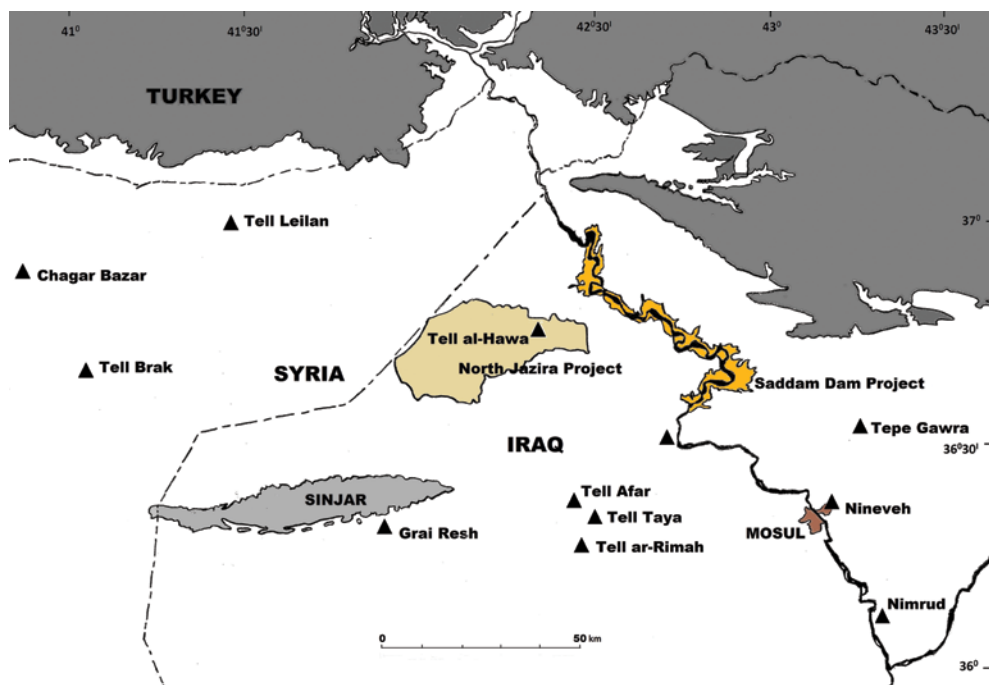


FIGURE 2 *The Eski Mosul Dam Salvage Project and the North Jazira Salvage Project (redrawn from Ball 1996, 423).*

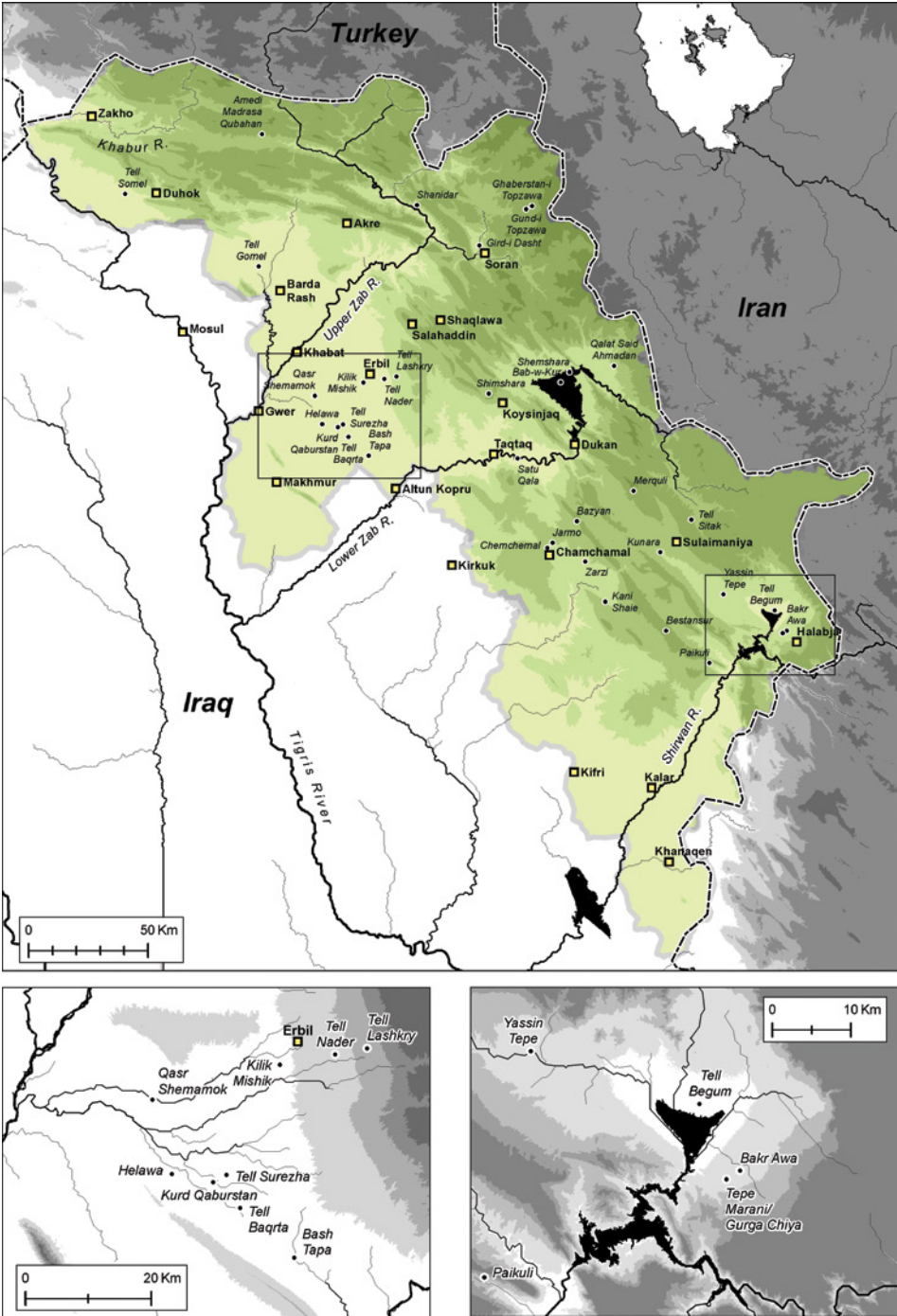


FIGURE 3 Most recent archaeological sites (2010–2015) in Adiabene and its vicinity (Kopanias, MacGinnis, Ur 2015).

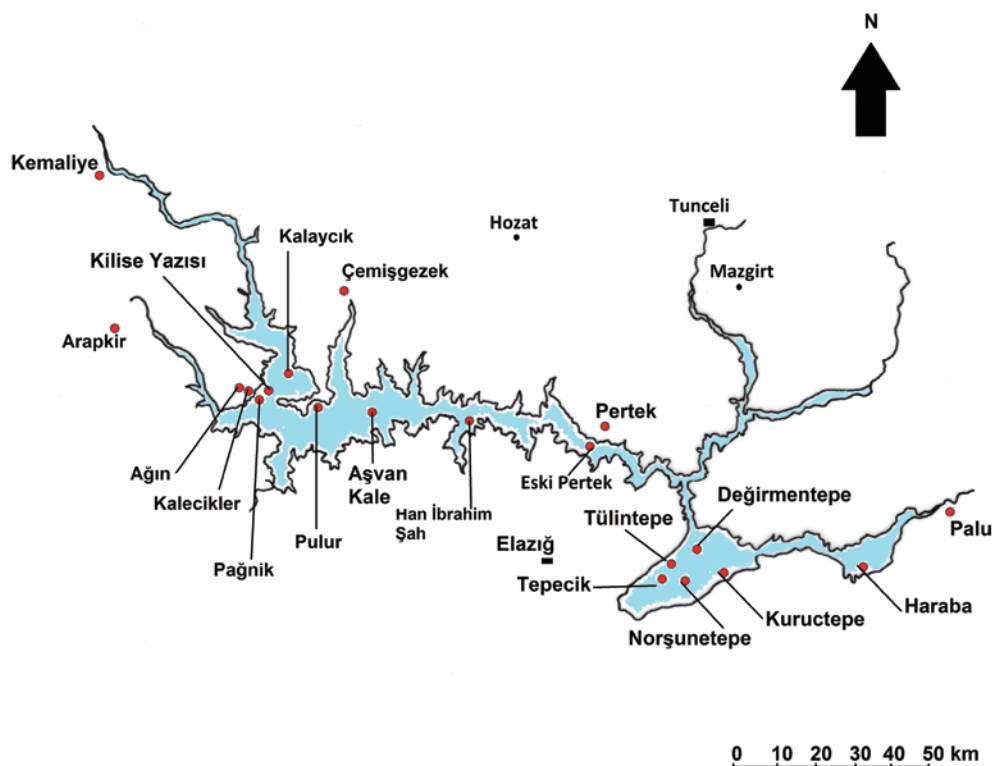


FIGURE 4 *Archaeological sites of the Keban Project (redrawn according to <http://tacdam.metu.edu.tr/node/81>).*



FIGURE 5 *Archaeological sites of the Lower Euphrates Project (redrawn according to <http://tacdam.metu.edu.tr/node/81>).*

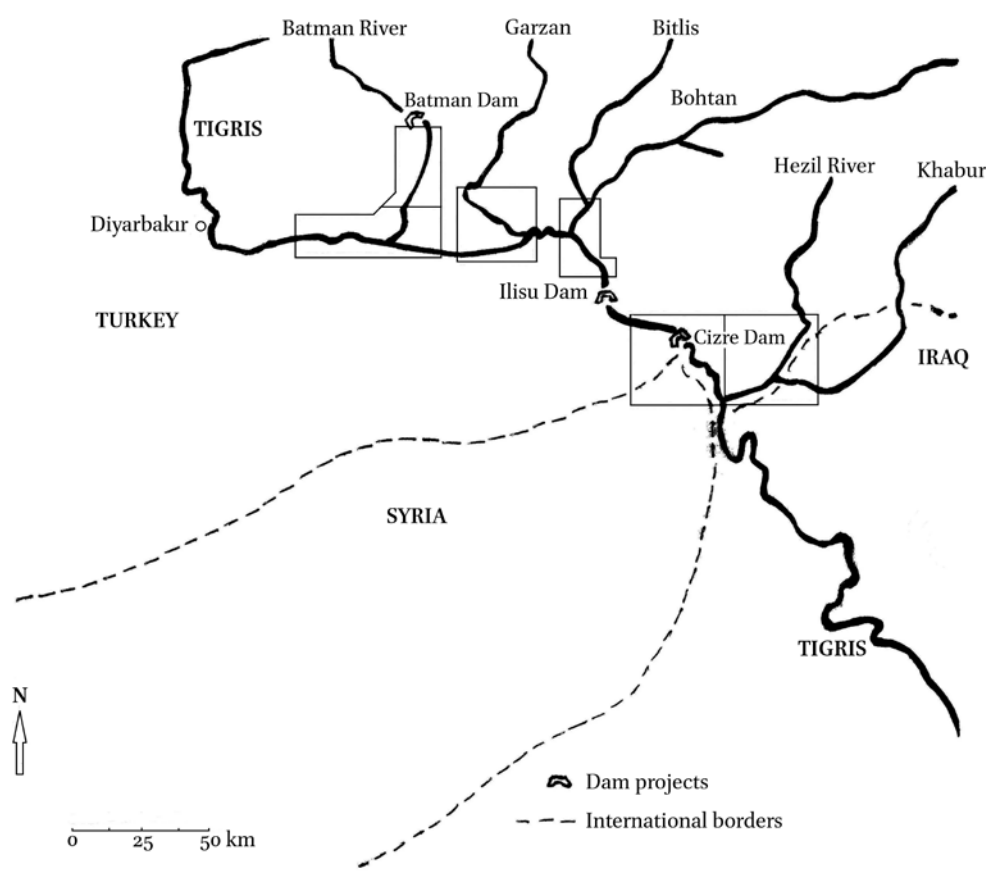


FIGURE 6 Previous archaeological projects in the Upper Tigris basin (redrawn from Algaze, Breuninger, Rosenberg 1991, 212, Fig. 1).

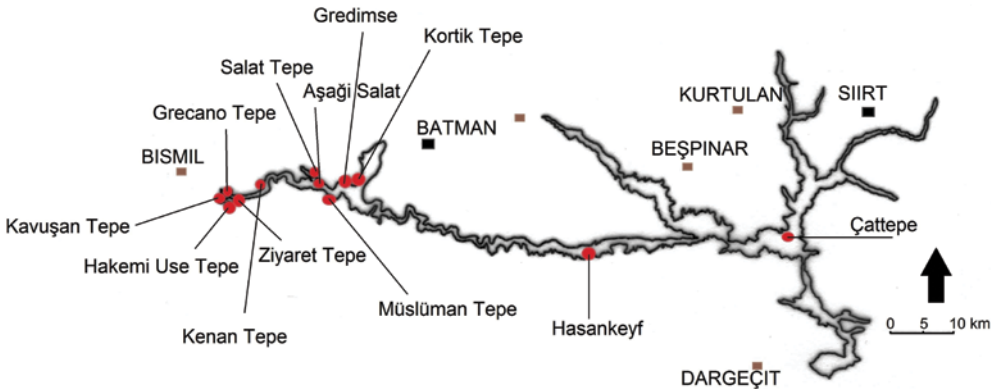


FIGURE 7 *Archaeological sites of the Ilısu Dam Project (redrawn according to T. Numan, J. Öztürk, J. Velibeyoğlu 2004).*

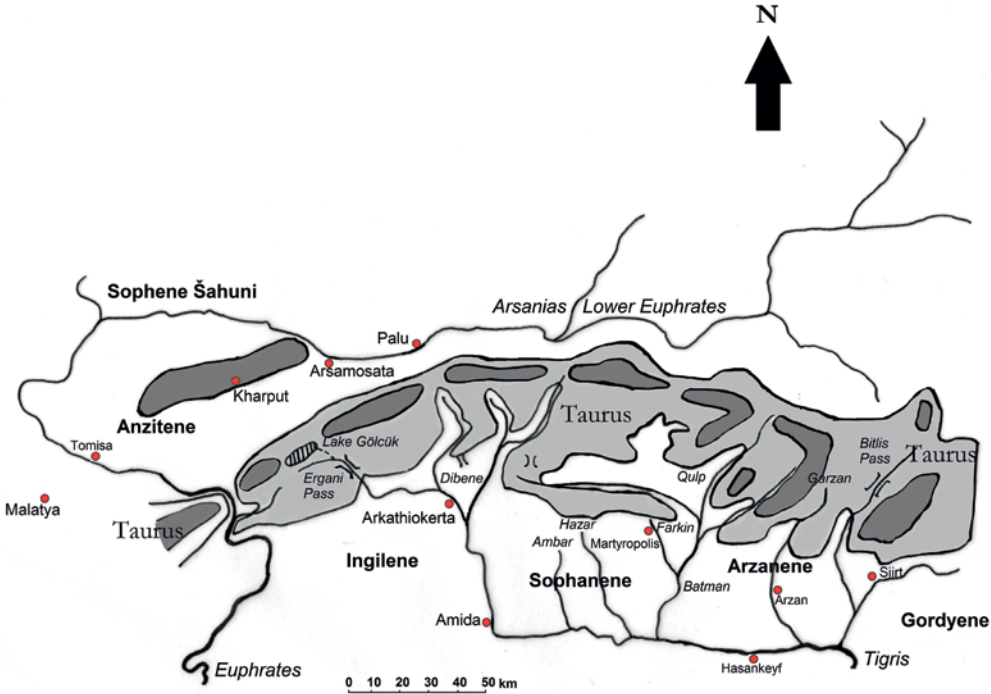


FIGURE 8 *Eastern Taurus and the Upper Tigris Valley (redrawn according to Dillemann 1961, Fig. 3).*

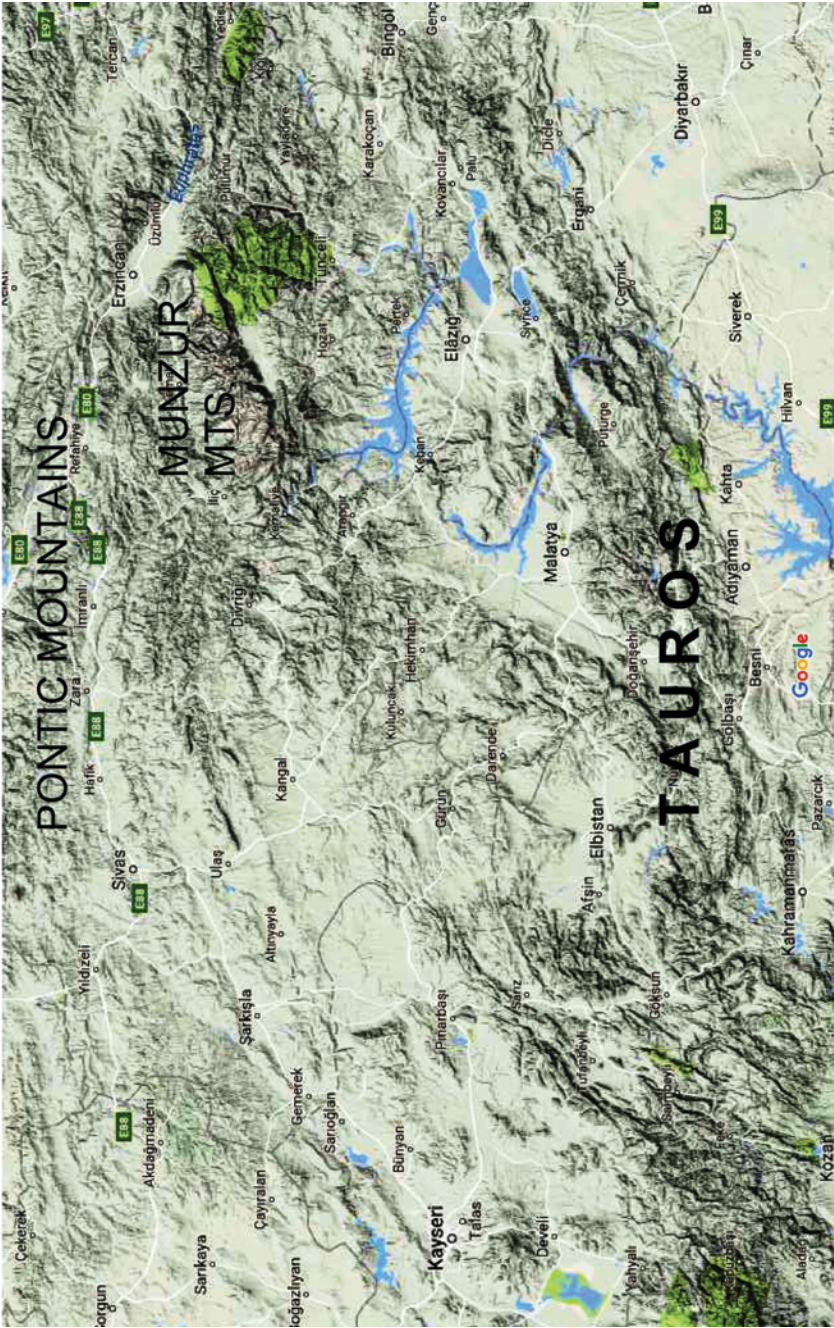


FIGURE 9 Strabo's Tauros and Antitauros (based on a Google map).

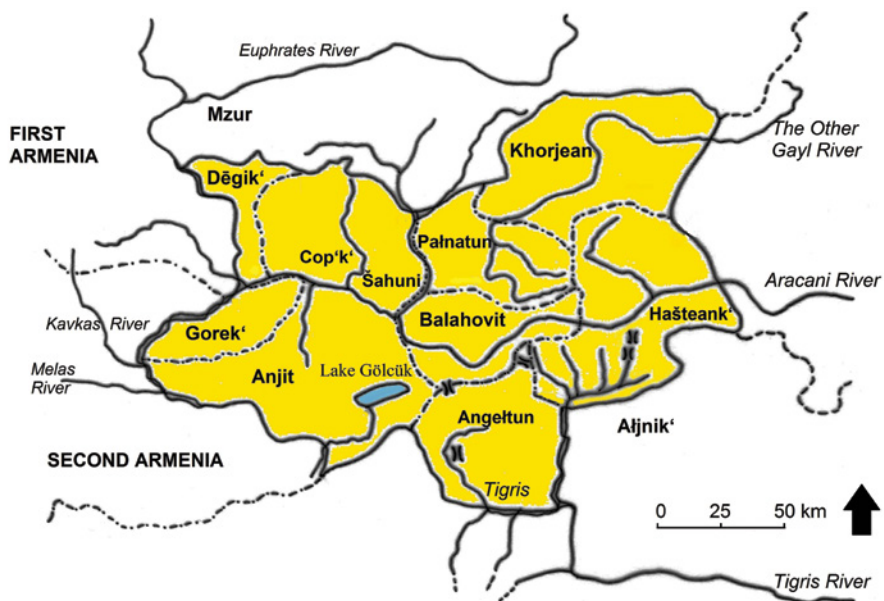


FIGURE 10 *Armenian districts in light of Ananias of Širak (redrawn according to Hewsén 1992, map XIII).*



FIGURE 11 *Boşat Relief.*
BY COURTESY OF HASAN SEZİK.



FIGURE 12 *Coin of Arsames.*

BY COURTESY OF THE CLASSICAL NUMISMATIC GROUP, INC.,
WWW.CNGCOINS.COM



FIGURE 13 *Coin of Xerxes.*

BY COURTESY OF THE CLASSICAL NUMISMATIC GROUP, INC.,
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FIGURE 14 *Coin of Arkathias.*

BY COURTESY OF NUMISMATIK LANZ MÜNCHEN.



FIGURE 15 *Coin attributed to the so-called Morphilig.*

BY COURTESY OF THE CLASSICAL NUMISMATIC GROUP, INC.,
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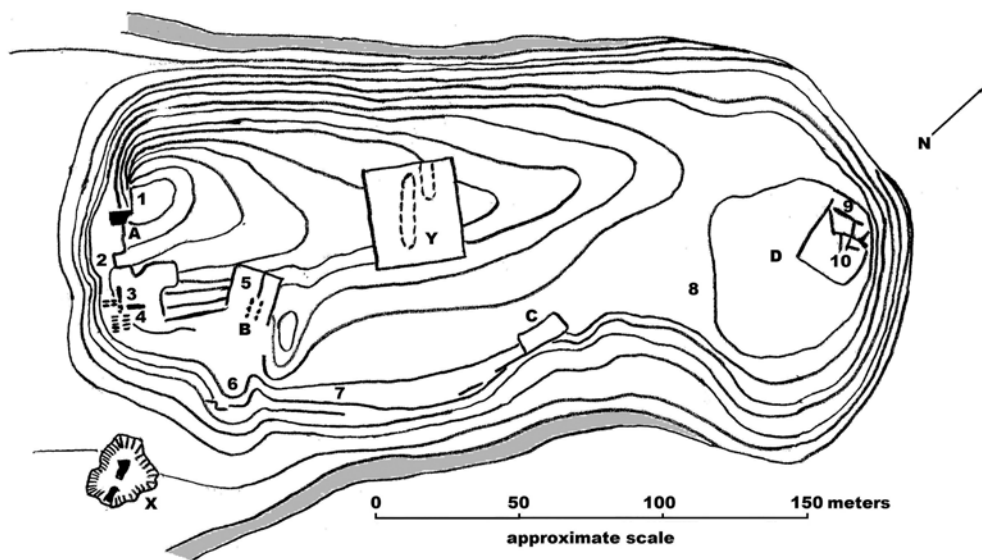


FIGURE 16 *Sketch of Haraba—Arsamosata (redrawn according to Sinclair 1989, 114 with modifications by M. Marciak).*

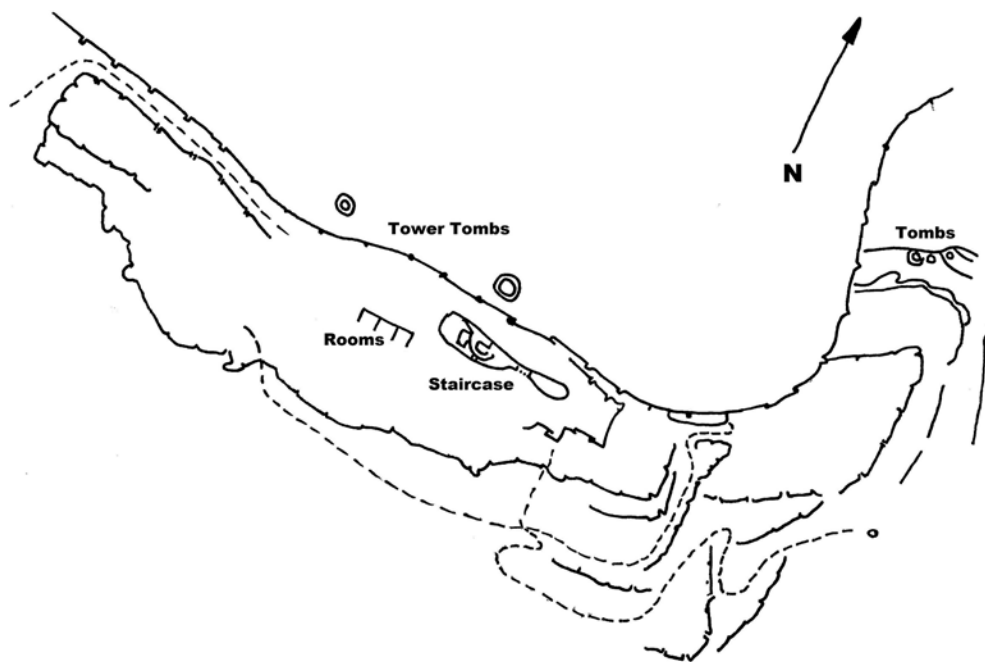


FIGURE 17 *Sketch of Eḡil's citadel (redrawn from Sinclair 1989, 197 with modifications by M. Marciak).*



FIGURE 18 *Prominence of Eğil in 2014 (view facing southeast).*



FIGURE 19 *Rock-cut tombs at Eğil in 2014 (view facing east).*

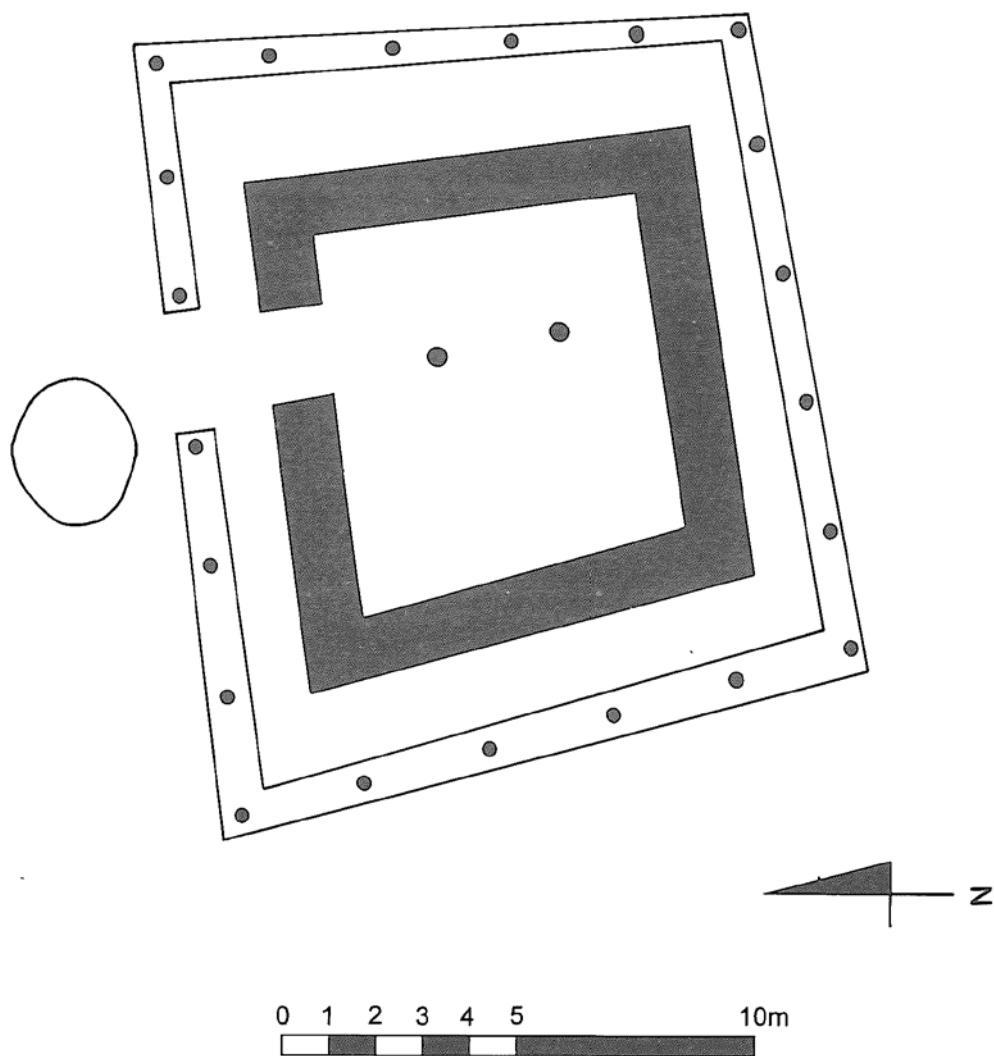


FIGURE 20 *Sacred place at Aşvan Kale (Mitchell 1998, 95, Fig. 10.5).*

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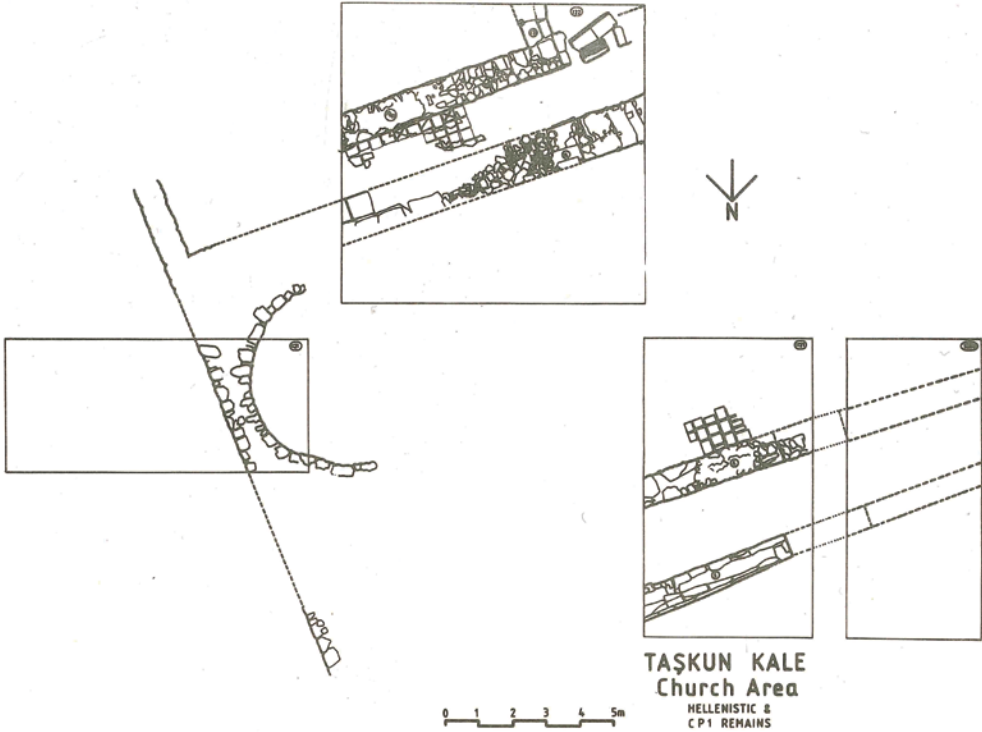


FIGURE 21 *Hellenistic sacred place at Taşkun Kale (McNicoll 1983, 25, Fig. 10).*
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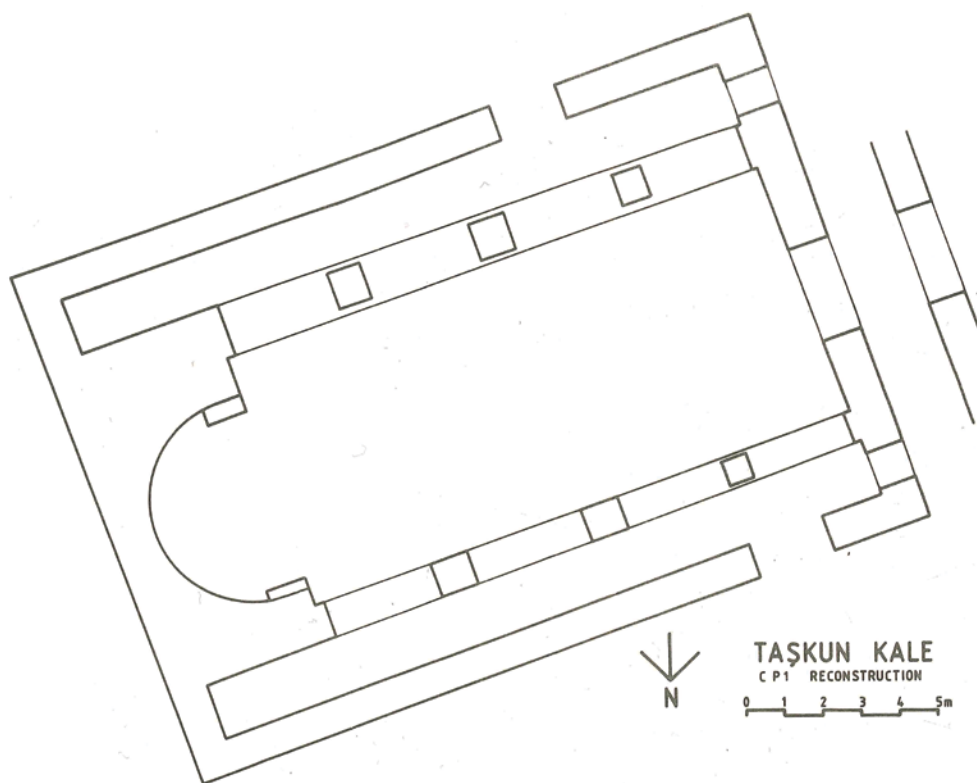


FIGURE 22 *Plan of remains of Christian Basilica at Taşkun Kale (McNicol 1983, 30, Fig. 13).*

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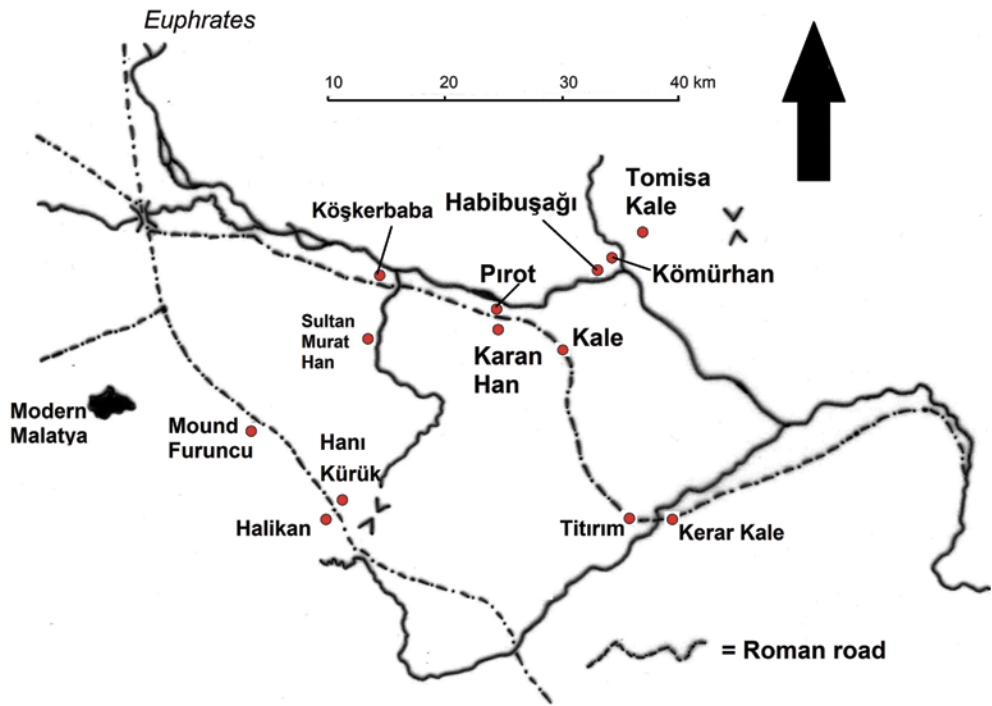


FIGURE 23 *Sketch of the vicinity of the Tomisa crossing (redrawn according to Sinclair 1989, 41 with modifications by M. Marciak).*



FIGURE 24 *Euphrates at Tomisa (view facing northeast).*

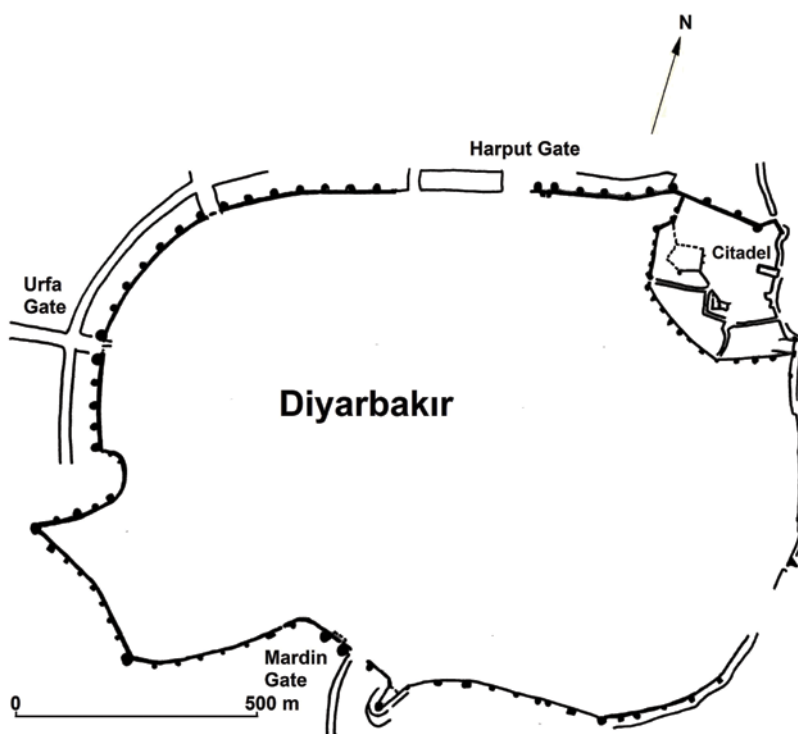


FIGURE 25 *Plan of fortifications of Amida (redrawn according to Sinclair 1989, 164 with modifications by M. Marciak).*



FIGURE 26 *Amida: Harput gate.*



FIGURE 27 *Amida: Urfa gate.*



FIGURE 28 *Section of the walls of Amida (east of the Harput gate).*

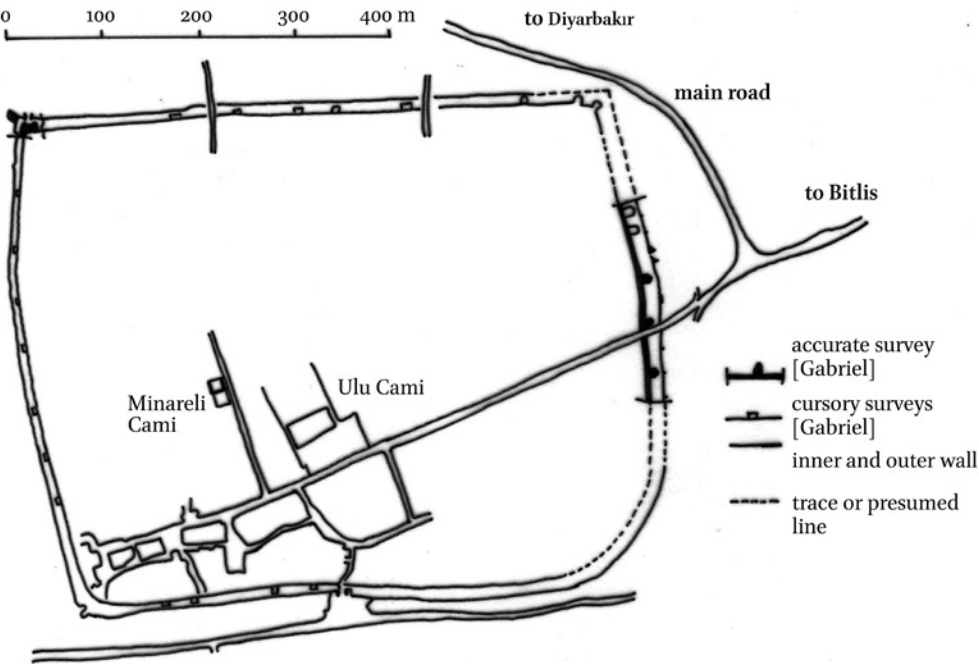


FIGURE 29 *Plan of fortifications of Martyropolis (redrawn according to Sinclair 1989, 288 with modifications by M. Marciak).*



FIGURE 30 *Martyropolis: Towers of former gateway at the northwest corner of the walls.*

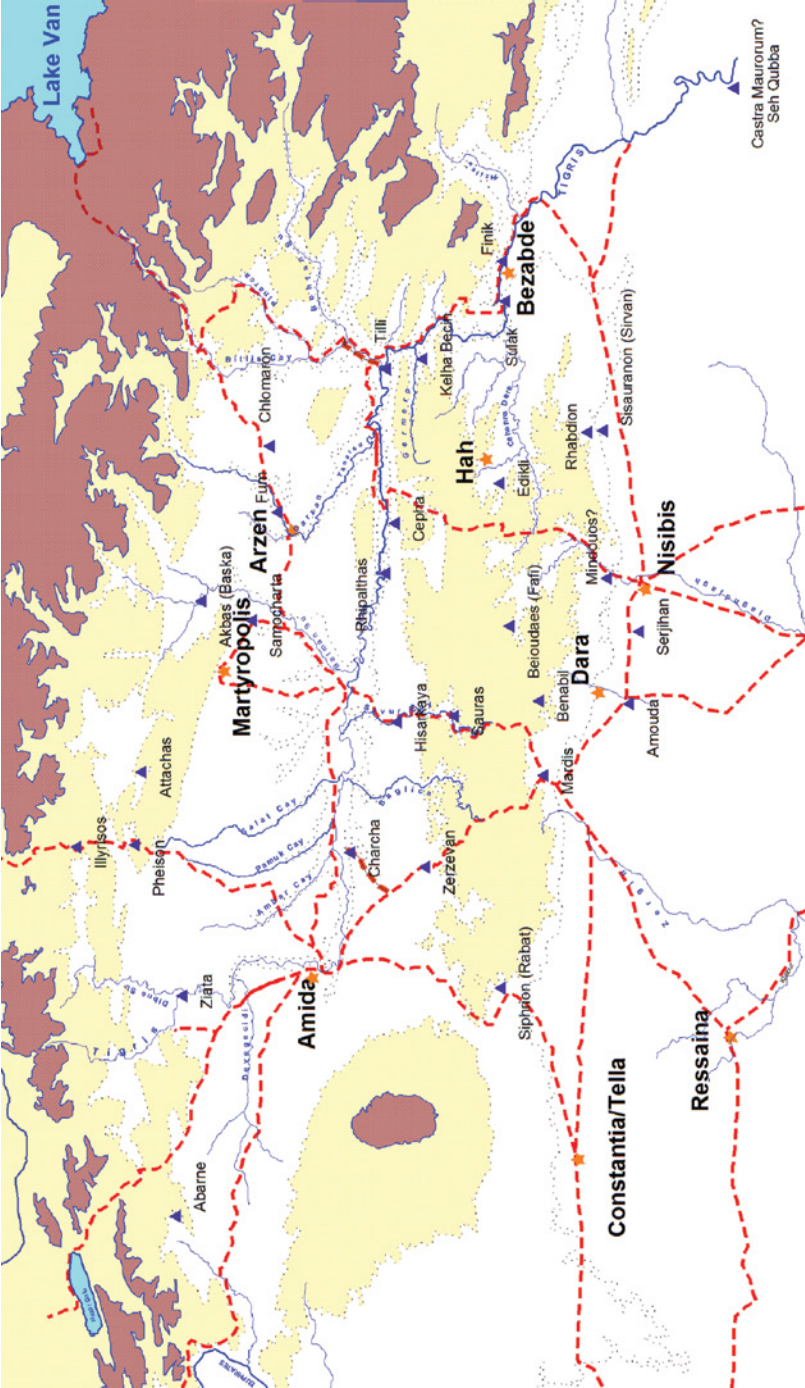


FIGURE 31 Cities, fortresses, routes, and bridges in the Upper Tigris basin.
BY COURTESY OF A. COMFORT, SEE ALSO COMFORT 2009, 218.

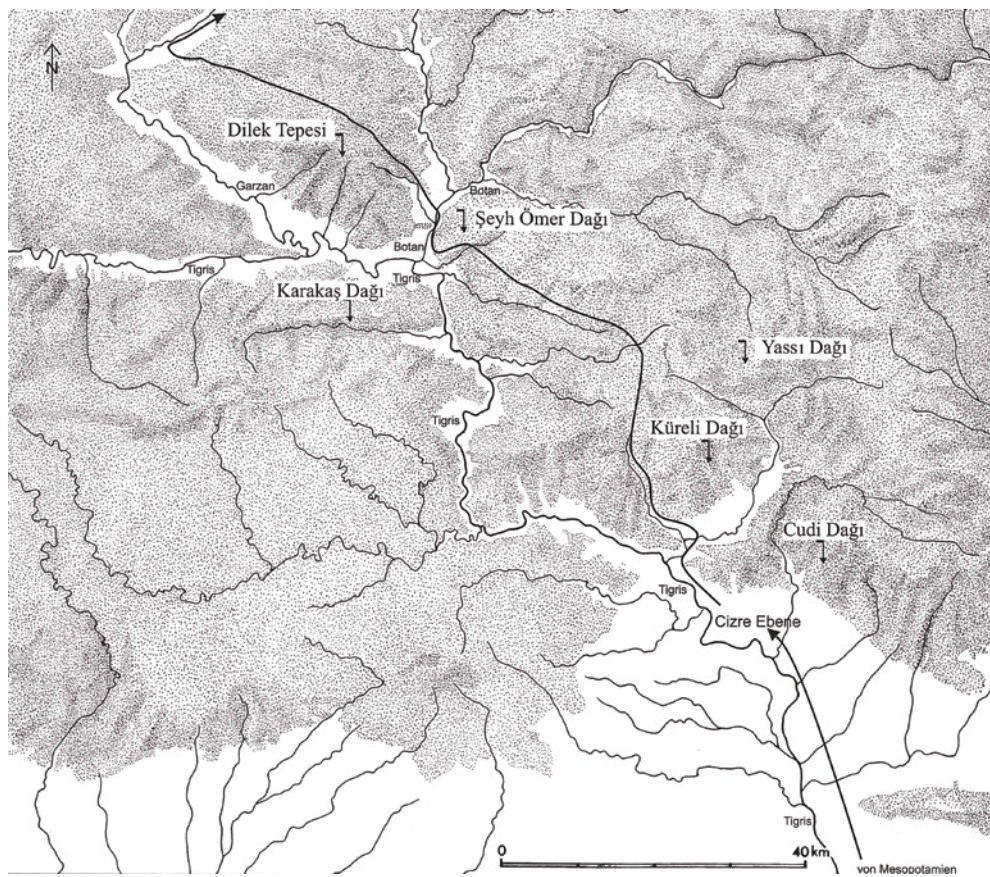


FIGURE 32 *The track of Xenophon's Greeks through Gordyene (Schachner, Šaglamtimur 2005, 94, Abb. 2).*



FIGURE 33 *The Tigris and its tributaries in the Gordyene region.*



FIGURE 34 *A small modern village located in a mountain recess along the modern road from Siirt to Şırnak.*



FIGURE 35 *The Bohtan canyon between Çattepe and Siirt.*

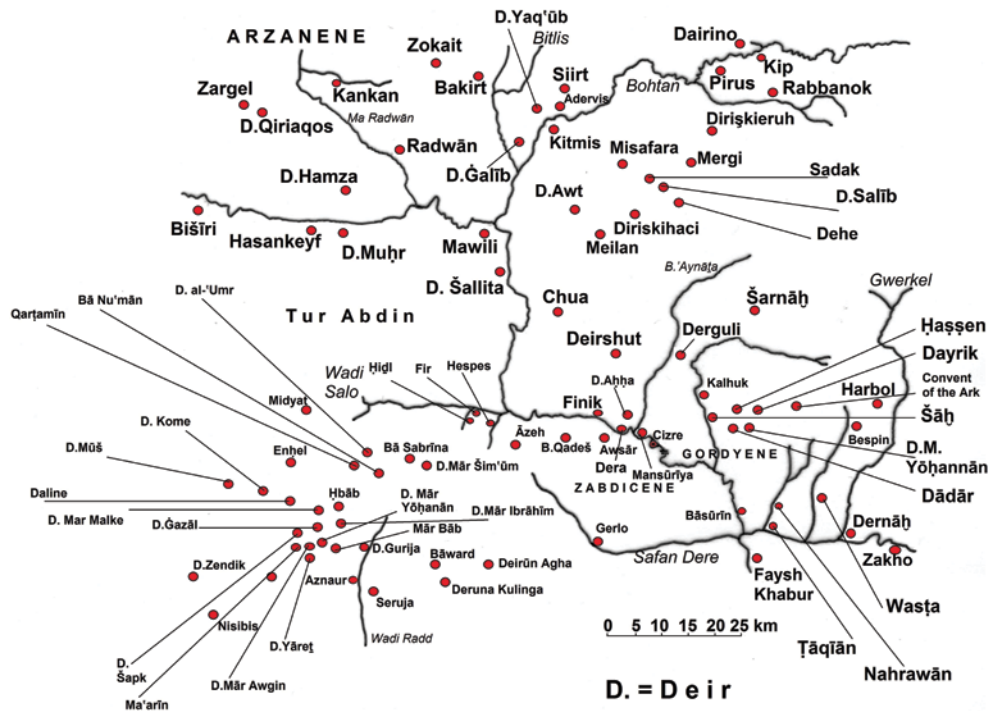


FIGURE 36 *Syriac ecclesiastical sites in the region according to M. Fiey (redrawn according to Fiey 1977).*

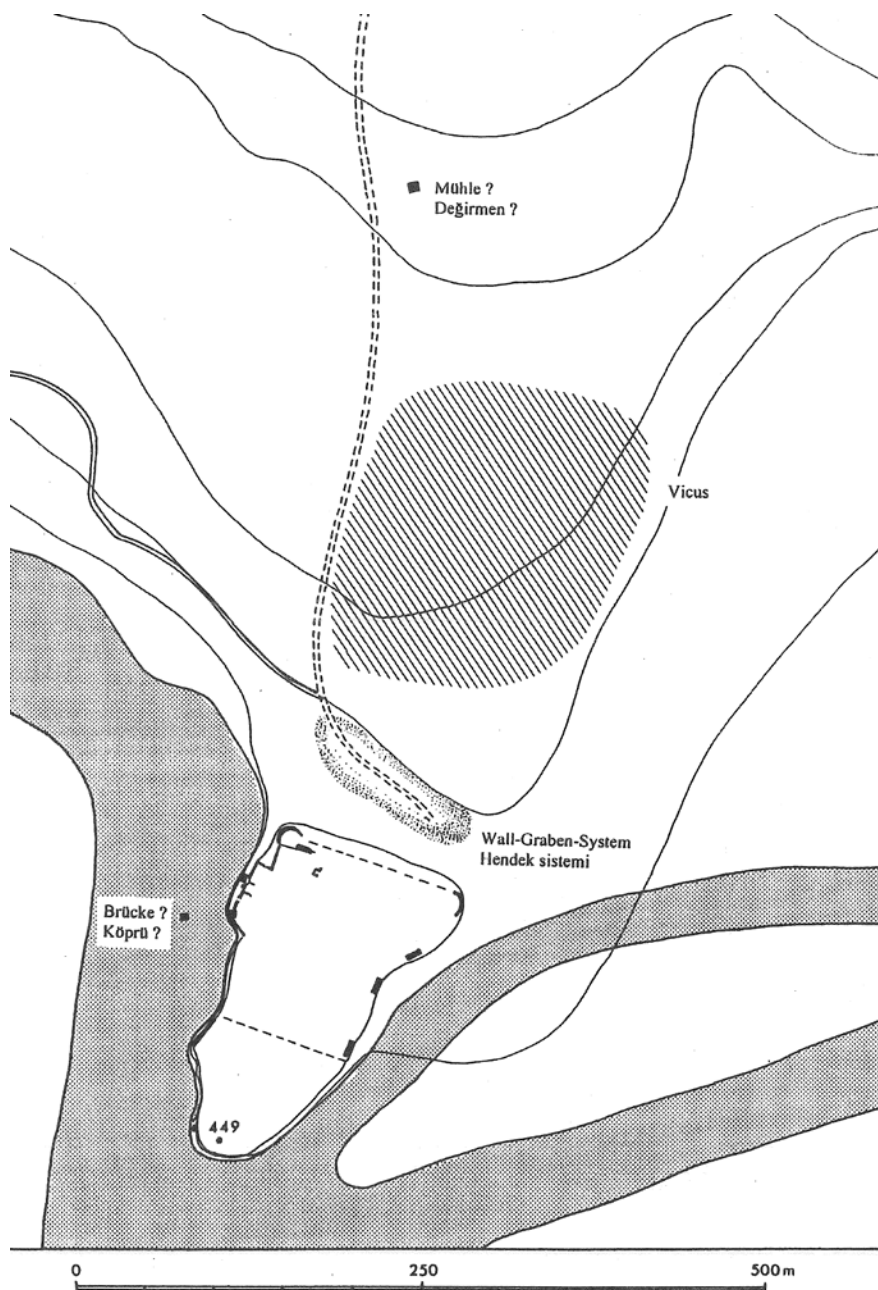


FIGURE 37 Plan of Çattepe (Velibeyoğlu, A. Schachner, S. Schachner 2002, 822).



FIGURE 38 *Site of Çattepe in 2014 (view facing south).*

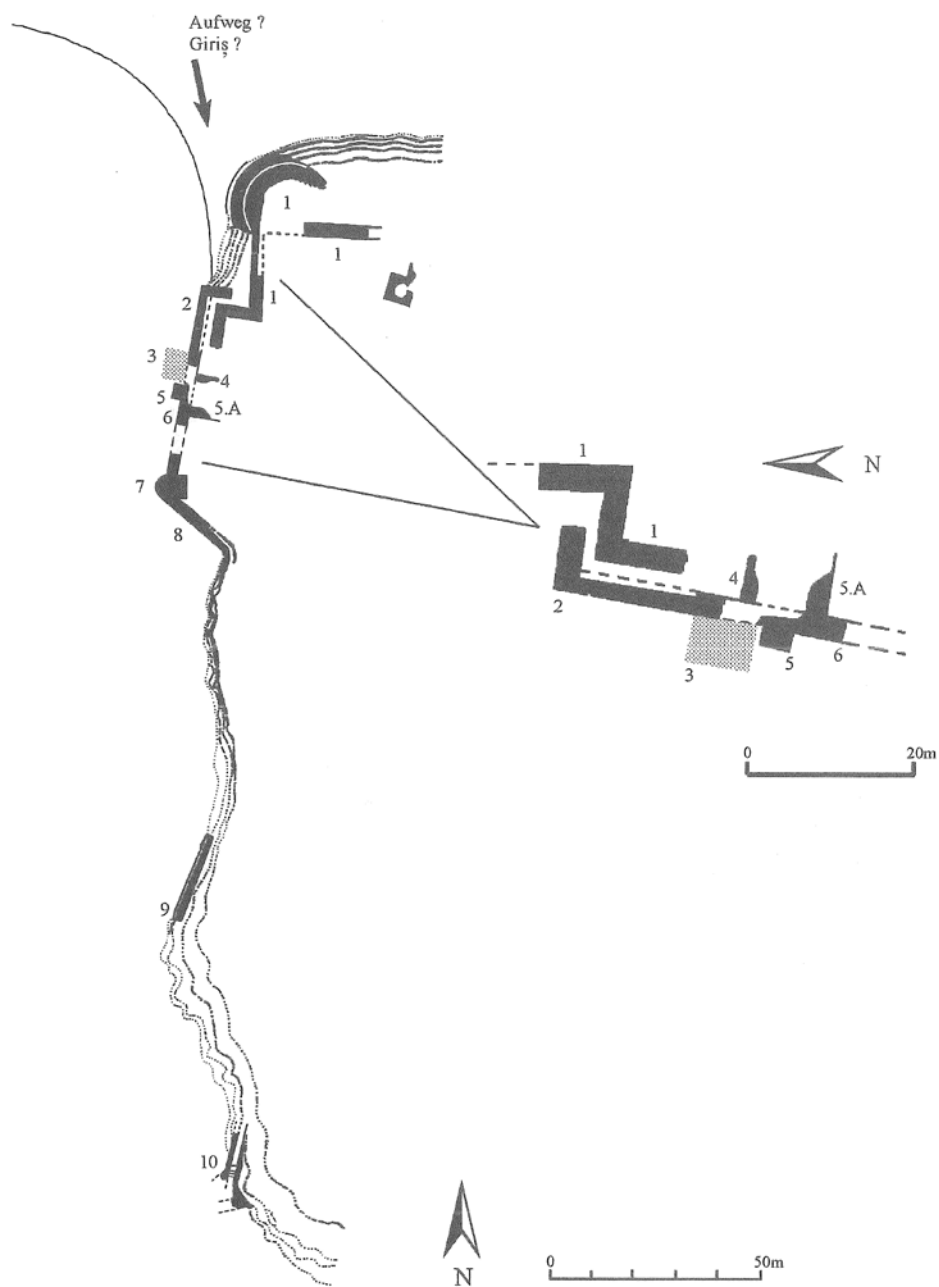


FIGURE 39 Plan of the girdling walls on western side of Çattepe (Velibeyoğlu, A. Schachner, S. Schachner 2002, 817).



FIGURE 40 *Roman girdling walls on western side of Çattepe in 2014.*

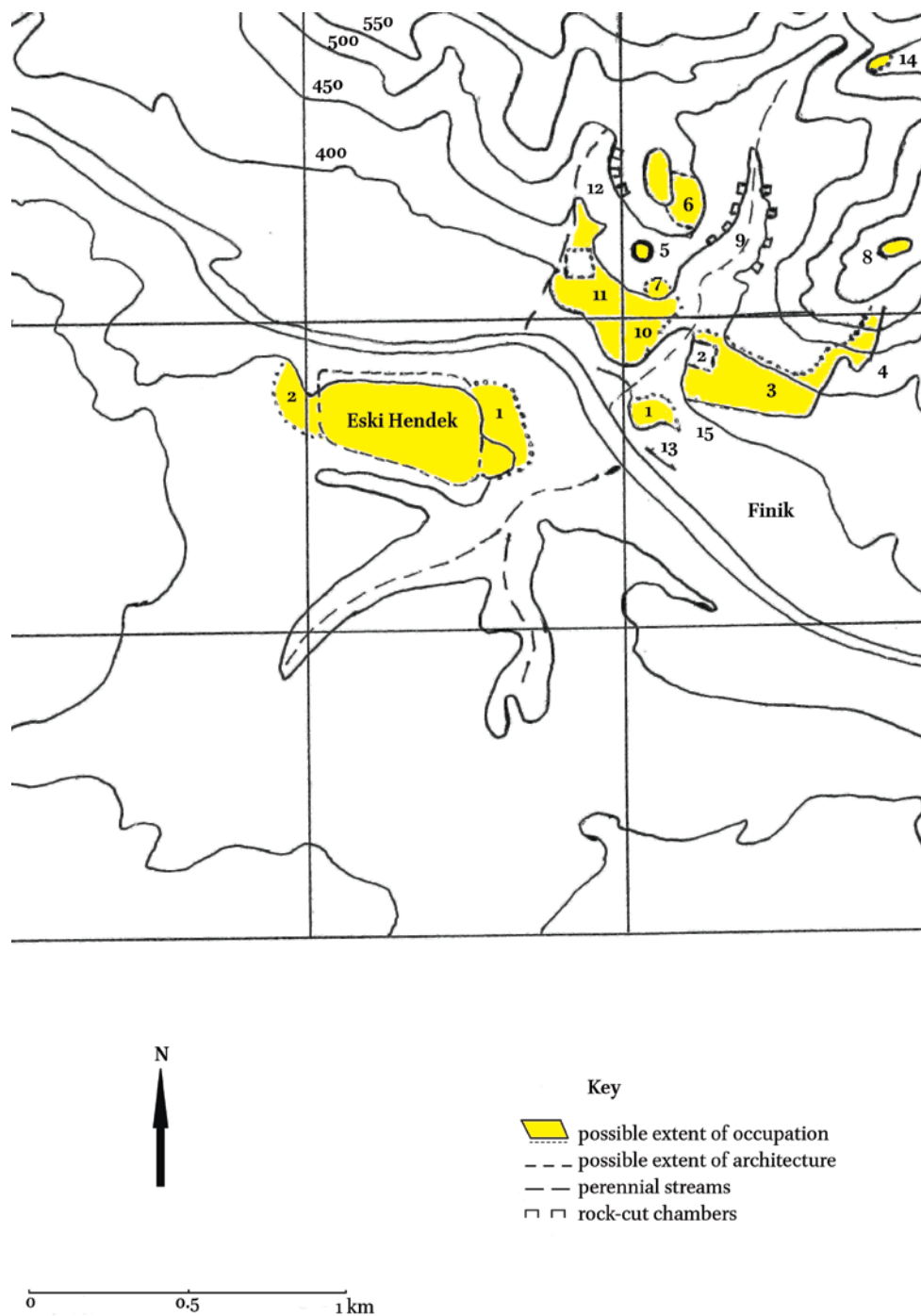


FIGURE 41 Plan of Eski Hendek and Eski Finik (redrawn according to Algaze 1989, 265, Fig. 9).



FIGURE 42 *General view of the Eski Finik Area in 2014 (seen from Eski Hendek).*

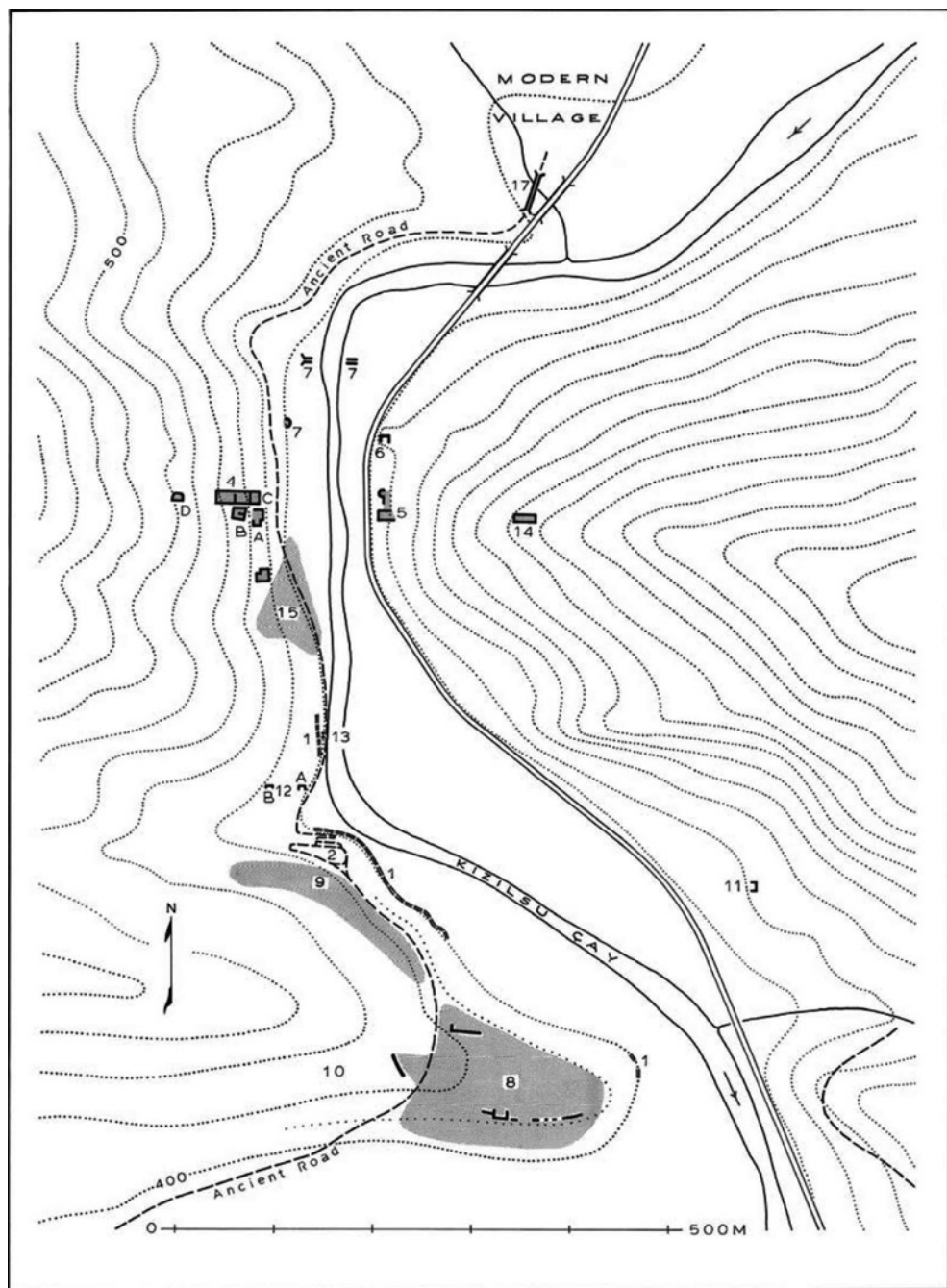


FIGURE 43 Plan of Kazrik Boğazı (Algaze, Hammer, Parker 2012, 83, Fig. 13).



FIGURE 44 *The Kazrik pass (in 2014, view facing south).*



FIGURE 45 *Parthian relief at Kazrik in 2014.*



FIGURE 46 *View of Hasankeyf (Google Earth Pro satellite image, December 20, 2016).*



FIGURE 47 *Ruins of Hasankeyf in 2014 (view facing north).*



FIGURE 48 *Eski Köprü in Hasankeyf in 2014 (view facing south).*

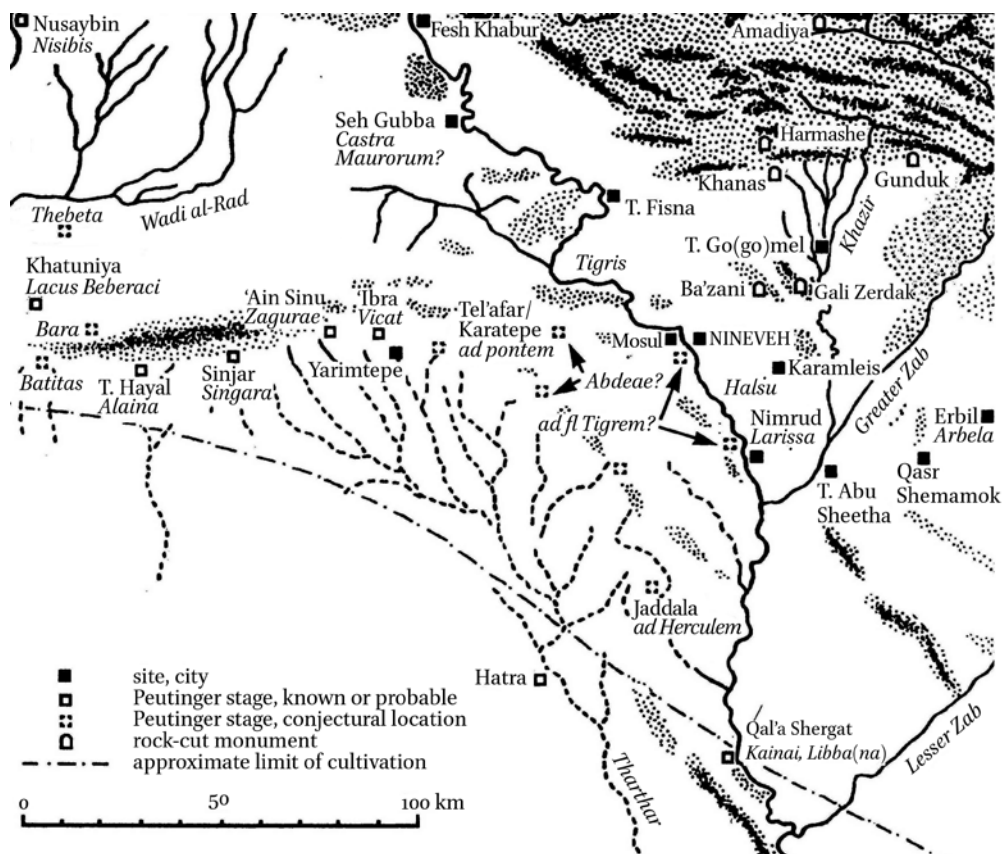


FIGURE 49 Archaeological sites in Adiabene (Reade 1998, 81, Fig. 2).



FIGURE 51 *Citadel of Erbil and the modern city in 2008 (Czech archaeological mission in North Iraq).*



FIGURE 52 'Red and black slips' from Erbil (Czech archaeological mission in North Iraq).



FIGURE 53 *Sarcophagus from Kilizu (the photo-archive of the superintendency for the archaeological heritage of Etruria).*



FIGURE 54 *Female figure from the Kilizu sarcophagi (the photo-archive of the superintendency for the archaeological heritage of Etruria).*

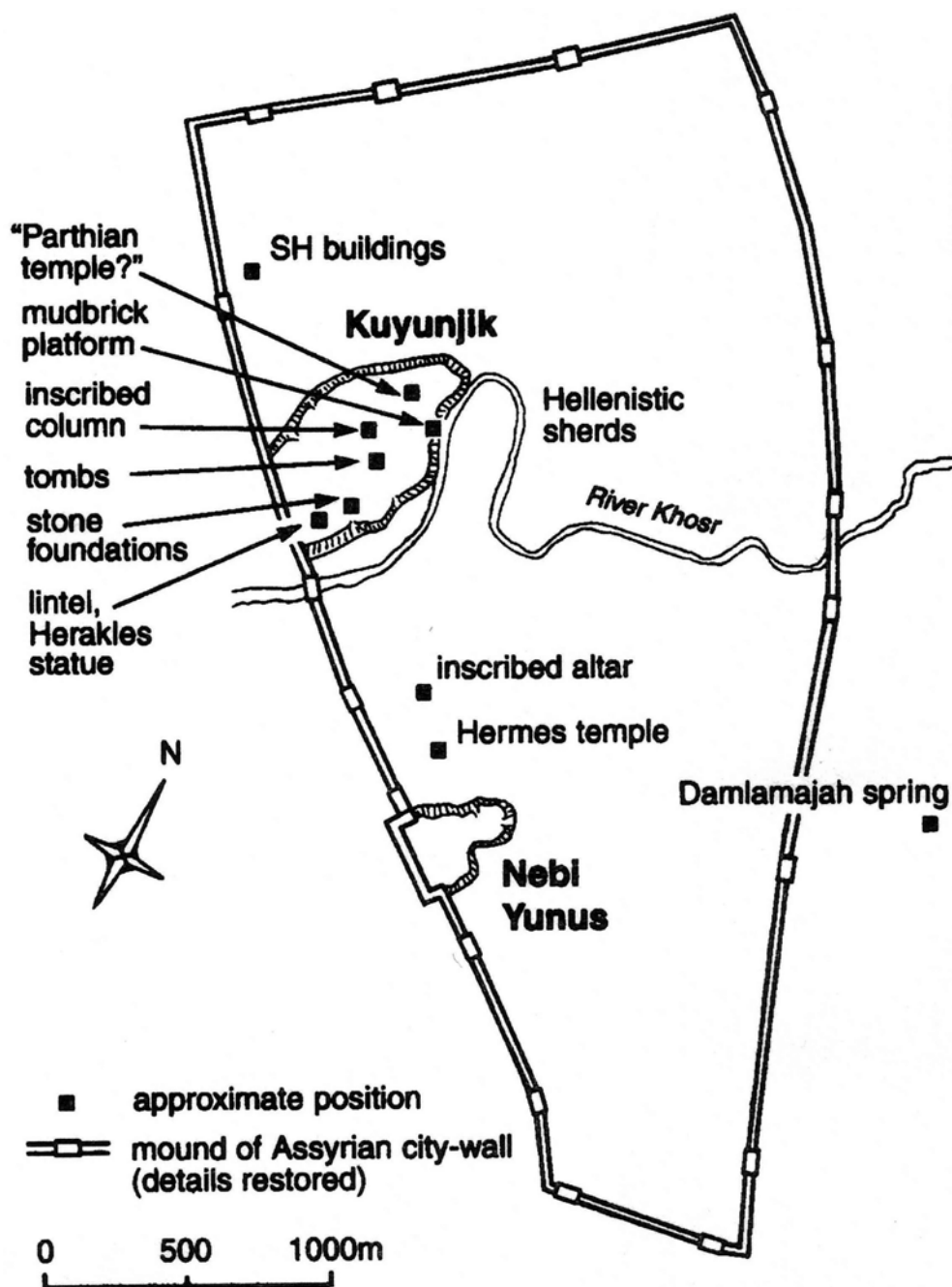


FIGURE 55 *Plan of Hellenistic-Parthian Nineveh (Reade 1998, 67).*



FIGURE 56 *Hermes from Nineveh* (Mathiesen 1992b, 188).

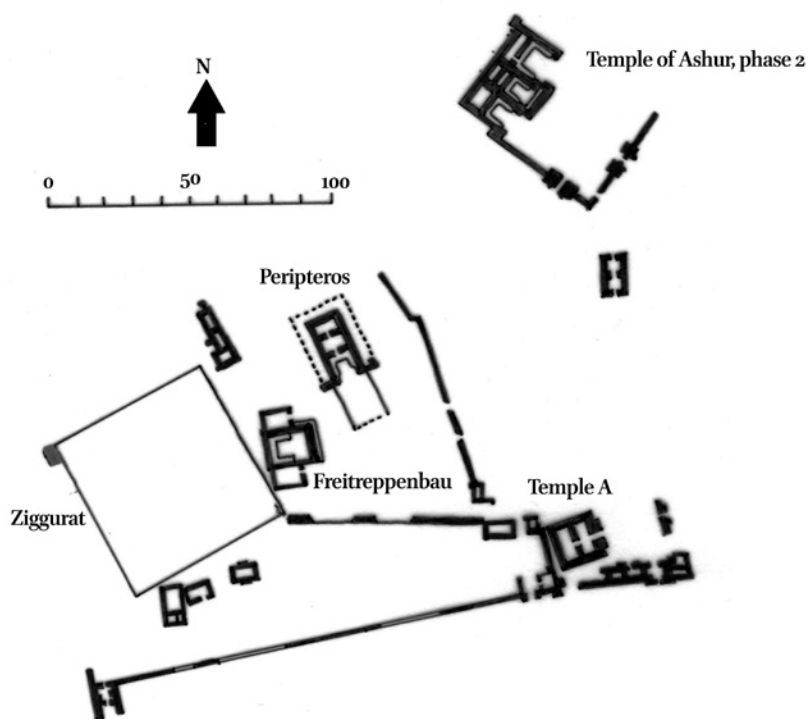


FIGURE 57 *Plan of Parthian Ashur—northeast sector (redrawn according to Downey 1988, 148, Fig. 65).*

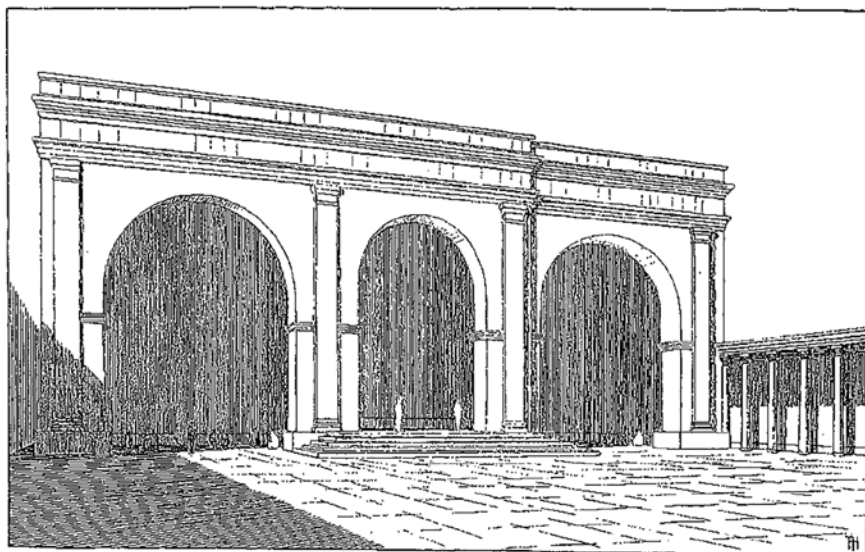


FIGURE 58 *Reconstruction of the Temple of Assur (Andrae 1938, 173, Abb. 73).*

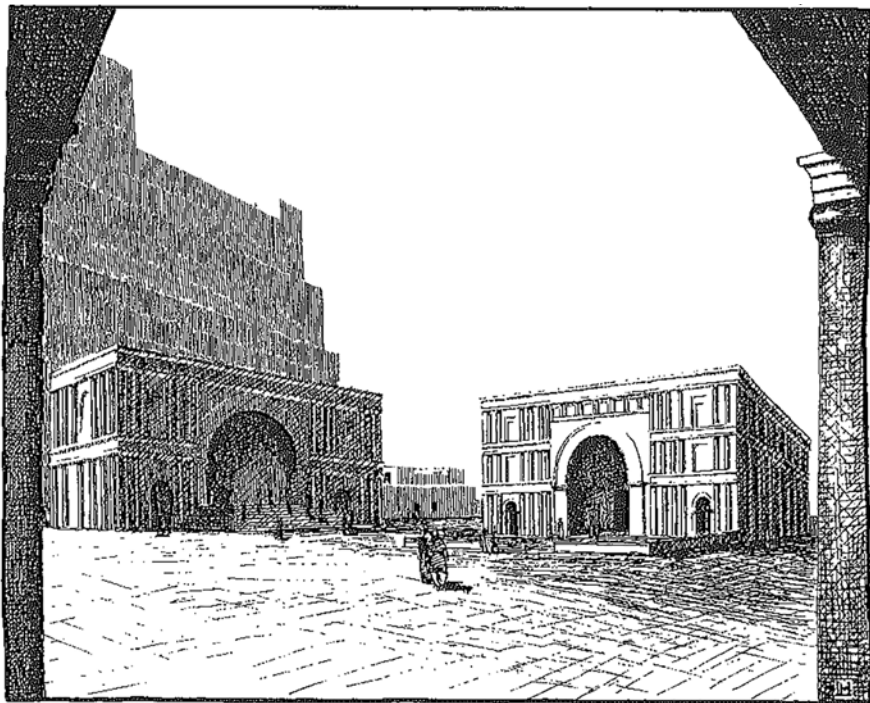


FIGURE 59 *Reconstruction of Ashur's temenos* ["Freitreppenbau", ziggurat, peripteros] (Andrae 1938, 177, Abb. 74).



FIGURE 60
*Herakles from Ashur (Mathiesen 1992, 194,
Fig. 46).*



FIGURE 61 *Pithos from Ashur (Andrae, Lenzen 1933, Fig. 46).*



FIGURE 62 *Coin of Abdissar [type 2, obverse].*
BY COURTESY OF F. DE CALLATAÏ.



FIGURE 63 *Coin of Abdissar [type 2, reverse].*
BY COURTESY OF F. DE CALLATAÏ.



FIGURE 64 *Coin of Monobazos I [obverse].*
BY COURTESY OF STAATLICHE MÜNZSAMMLUNG
MÜNCHEN.



FIGURE 65 *Coin of Monobazos I [reverse].*
BY COURTESY OF STAATLICHE MÜNZSAMMLUNG
MÜNCHEN.



FIGURE 66 *The Batas-Herir Relief* (Boehmer, R.M., Gall, H. von, 1973, Taf. 28).

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FIGURE 67 *Reconstruction of the Batas-Herir Relief (Boehmer, R.M., Gall, H. von, 1973, 68, Abb. 2).*

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FIGURE 68 *The Batas-Herir Relief in 2016.*

BY COURTESY OF THE ITALIAN ARCHAEOLOGICAL MISSION IN ASSYRIA.

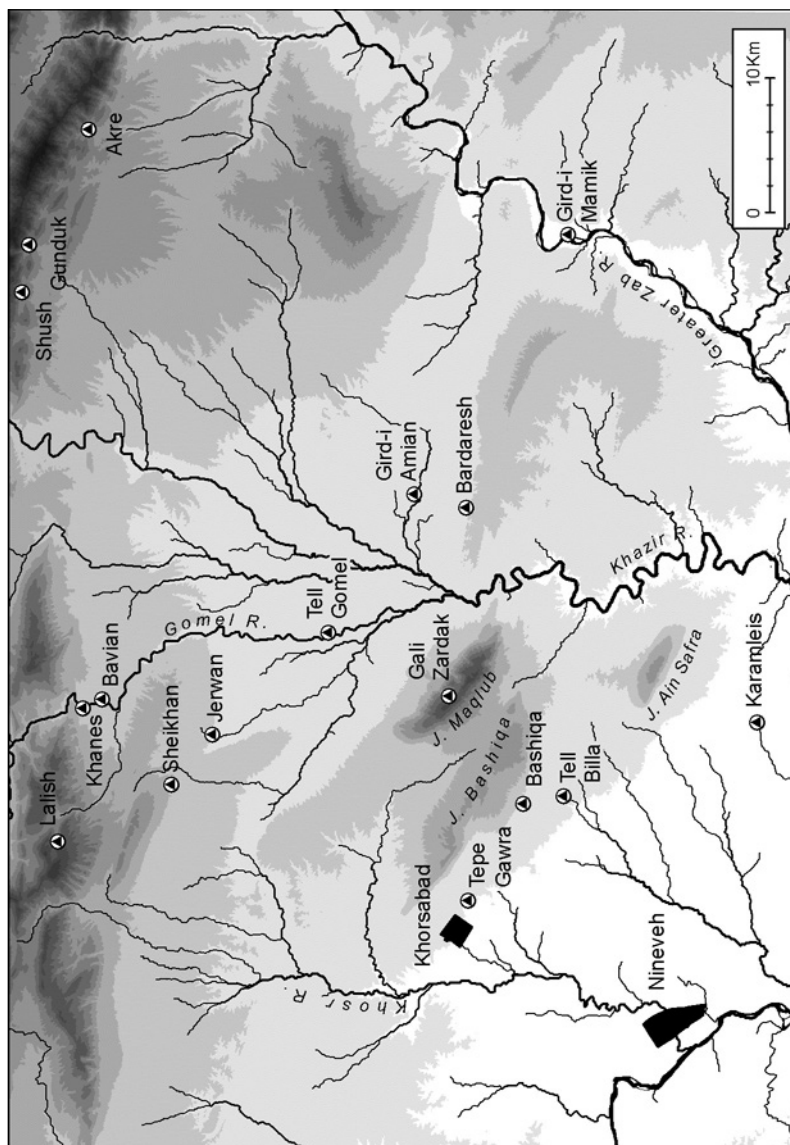


FIGURE 69 *Ancient reliefs in the Navkur region.*
BY COURTESY OF JASON UR.



FIGURE 70 *Navkur plain seen from Gali Zerdak (The Land of Nineveh Archaeological Project).*
PHOTOGRAPH BY M. MARCIAK.



FIGURE 71 *The Gali Zerdak pass approached from the north (The Land of Nineveh Archaeological Project).*
PHOTOGRAPH BY M. MARCIAK.



FIGURE 72 *The Khanes Relief.*

BY COURTESY OF J.E. READE AND J.R. ANDERSON.

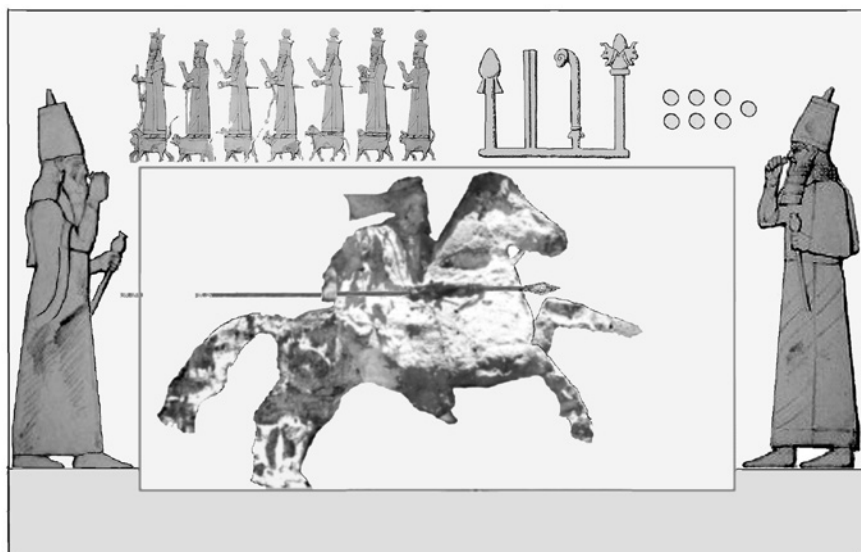


FIGURE 73 *Reconstruction of the Khanes Relief.*

BY COURTESY OF J.E. READE AND J.R. ANDERSON.



FIGURE 74 *Statue of 'tlw from Hatra.*

BY COURTESY OF D.C. SIEBRANDT, DEAKIN UNIVERSITY.



FIGURE 75 *Septimius Severus' coins featuring 'seated captives'.*
 BY COURTESY OF THE CLASSICAL NUMISMATIC GROUP, INC.,
WWW.CNGCOINS.COM



FIGURE 76 *Arch of Septimius Severus in Rome.*



FIGURE 77 Assyrian ecclesiastical provinces according to J.-M. Fiey (redrawn according to Fiey 1965).

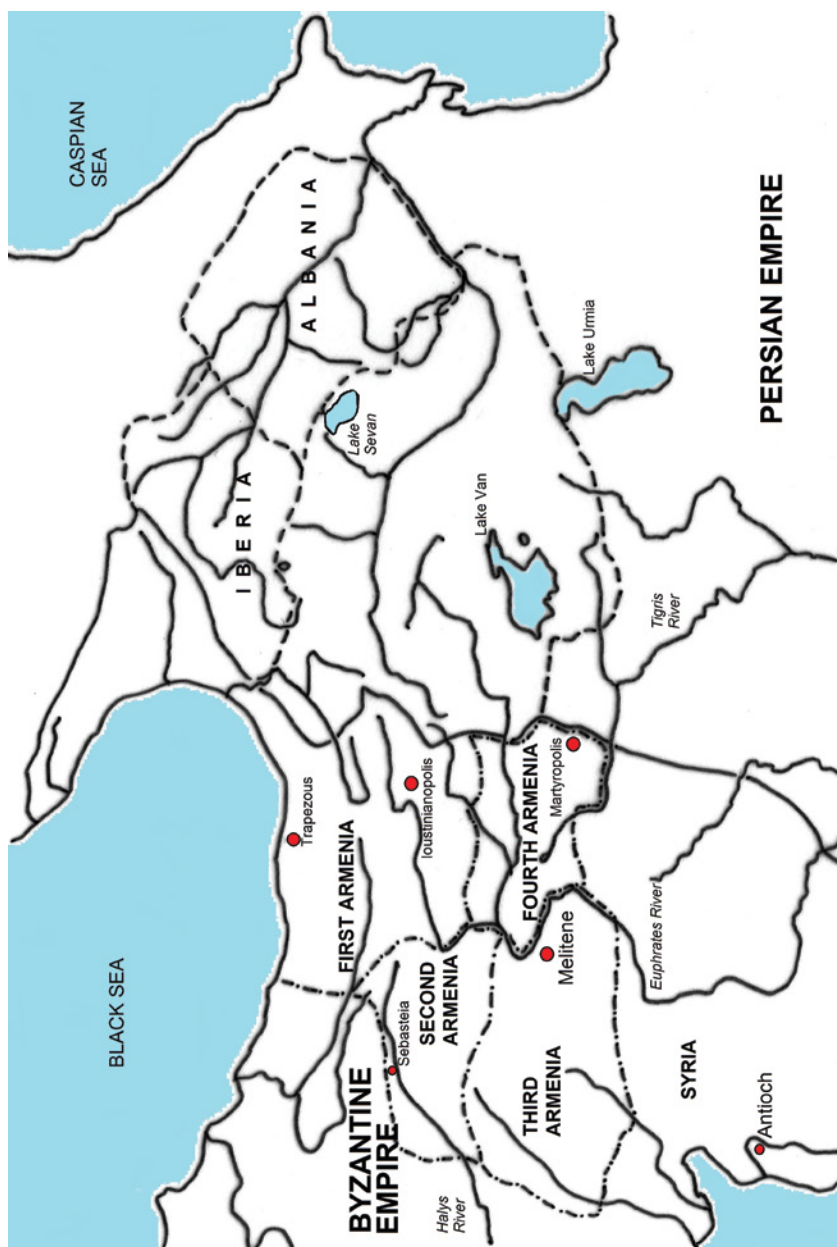


FIGURE 78 *Emperor Justinian I's reorganization of empire in the East (redrawn according to Hewsen 1992, map 3).*

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